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By the AUTHOR OF CAPE COD FOLKS.



LAST CHANCE
JUNCTION

A NOVEL

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LASTCHANCE JUNCTION

Boston LAST-CHANCE JUNCTION ^{San Francisco}

Since Miss MacLean made the somewhat costly blunder of giving to the good people whom she studied for her first inimitable novel, "Cape Cod Folks," not only their local habitation but their names, she seems to have striven to make their successors something less than real. Whether from this cause or another, her characters impress one as being, as one may say, seen by moonlight. They are real—sometimes vividly, sometimes painfully—real men and women; but they are men and women seen not by every-day sunshine, but by some light paler, more uncertain and more mystical; a light in which they sometimes loom larger than mortals and which softens their deformities to mere grotesqueness. This peculiarity is to more than the usual degree characteristic of her last story, now before us; its atmosphere is remote, its voices come to us like echoes. But as all minds with wide horizons must sometimes find delight in moonlight and in echoes, so all such minds will welcome Miss MacLean's latest book. As its name indicates, it is the story of a sort of camp of refuge; one of those strange places, familiar enough, by report at least, to every one familiar with the far West; where, in some almost inaccessible mountain nook, there is found a settlement of refugees bankrupt in money and reputation; a community of Ishmaelites, where the revolver takes the place of the visiting-card. The story follows the fortunes of several such groups as this, tracing the various journeyings and adventures which lead them far, but bring them back always to Lastchance in the end, until, indeed, some of them set out on that longest of all journeys, at whose end, we trust, there wait camps of refuge also. The story is always interesting, and sometimes vividly so. There is something Thackerayesque in the strong strokes which draw for us Colonel Magnus Bloomer and his wife Bandoline, that delightful pair for whom the minor moralities are as if they were not, and whose faith in the obligation of something to turn up brings the Micawbers affectionately to mind. There are many dramatic incidents, which we might deprecate sometimes as sensational incidents, but for our conviction that their peers will greet us tomorrow morning, in the newspaper, perhaps, or the chance letter of a friend. The best work of the book goes to the picturing of the old dog Grayface, the gaunt, maimed, scarred old creature, blind from his plunge into a burning cabin to rescue a little child; who, from some strange and subtle instinct, attaches himself, as to a master, to whomever at Lastchance is for the moment sunk lowest in misfortune. It is a poignantly pathetic fancy, and treated to the close with simplicity and sympathy.

[Lastchance Junction. By the author of "Cape Cod Folks." Boston: Cupples & Hurd.]

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SECOND EDITION.

TO MY SONS,
JOHN AND DUDLEY.

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THE HERO.

CHAPTER I.

THE HERO.

It was a theater for which a bold range of the Rockies formed a background.

The arena was the broad plain itself, stretching in either direction as far as eye could see.

Rows of rough-hewn pine boards, erected shakily, tier above tier, constituted the auditorium. In the centre of the plain was the corral, where one saw herded the wild or vicious animals who were soon to take part in the play. Pending the first scene, Colonel Magnus Bloomer, the proprietor, walked splendidly up and down before his audience.

The Colonel's tall hat had the air of hovering

between news of some possible bonanza on the one hand, or the soundless depths of financial ruin on the other; his person was resplendent with jewels of indeterminate value. By his side walked a handsome stranger, very quietly attired.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you in the East," said Colonel Magnus Bloomer, "you're too effete! I say it as between man and man, and no offence. But you've got eyes as well as I have, and there's no disguisin' the fact; you're too infernally, doggoned effete!"

The stranger's slow smile deepened. "Yes," said he; "I know that we are very effete."

"Why, you air!" expostulated Colonel Bloomer, earnestly. "You've been dropped in the tracks, you've been dead and forgot, you've been buried and snowed over, for some three or four hundred years!"

The stranger laughed good naturedly, but Colonel Bloomer shook his head with a portentous sigh. "You're as effete as a last year's turnip patch," said he. "Why," he added, by way of further impressing his point, "look at

your women folks over there!" He pointed blankly with his cane to three dark-hued forms, amid the gala-day costumes that surrounded them. One face especially, from its black dress, shone out palely and magnificently, like a star. Observing the undisguised direction of the Colonel's cane, a scornful, half-amused gleam shot from the fine eyes and curved the lips over strong, white teeth.

"Now, *she's* got p'int's, that one in the middle, — your sister," admitted the Colonel confusedly; "but she needs tonin' up and freshenin' out and colorin'. She needs sorter bloomin' and flowerin' out, as ye might say, — flowerin' out!"

"Yes, I see, I see," replied the gentle stranger.

"Now, look at *my* women folks!"

The Colonel promptly levelled his cane in another direction, where, in the most conspicuous part of the structure, Mrs. Colonel Magnus Bloomer seemed to draw all the afternoon rays to herself and then to scintillate them forth again. She was large, handsome, florid, and she was set in a frame of inexhaustible brilliancy.

Some young girls, of a like tropical luxuriance of color, surrounded her, and these were surrounded by a group of young men, brave with vivid neck-scarfs and bright jewels, and whose tall silk hats seemed to hold the same precarious tenure on prosperity and social eminence as that indicated by the Colonel's own.

As he gazed, however, the Colonel entirely recovered his self-complacency.

"I guess you'll conclude to pick up stakes and come out here to settle!" he observed.

"Oh, very likely, very likely," smilingly replied the stranger.

"You're effete," again said the Colonel; "it's somethin' in the atmosphere. Let me take my show back to the States, and my buckin' horses refuses to buck, my wild steers gits as tame as kittens, my kickin' mules breaks their heart and dies. So I have confined my shows to the crystal atmosphere of the unbounded West, sir. I have got, sir, in that corral yonder, two bulls, just down from Jim Codman's ranch, who will have sech a fight presently as will knock all the sand out of the

effete monarchy of Spain! I have got a broncho in there that has killed two men in that very corral durin' this past week! I have got —"

A grandiloquent wave of the Colonel's hand was mistaken by the out-watchers at the corral as the usual signal for the opening of the play. A goaded bull rushed out foaming and bellowing, on the plain. The Colonel quickly leaped to his seat. The stranger followed him with a few long deliberate strides.

Another bull, this one with a flaunting red banner tied to his horns, was admitted to the scene. He came panting with rage from the hands of his tormentors. His savage eyeballs glared with thirst; he rushed towards a pool that shone, some distance off, on the floor of the vast natural stage, the red banner streaming from his horns.

The first bull saw, and, smiting the earth with his terrible horns, pursued him madly. The air was frightful with their bellowings. It was an exhibition of brute malignant rage terrible to witness. The thirsty bull had almost reached

the pool, when he felt the breath of his pursuer and turned to meet him. The white foam dripped from his nostrils, his eyes were balls of blood. He braced himself bravely for the attack, but he had gotten too near the soft earth of the pool; the blow of his antagonist, coming with onrushing force, sent him backward; his hind legs sank in the treacherous bog. In vain he tried to extricate himself, in vain he bent his head for the second fierce attack; it gored him, pinned him to the earth; the smoking blood surged out, and he lay still, the battle ended.

"Humph!" said the Colonel, who had seated himself a little above the company of strangers, the better to instruct them in the play; "that wa'n't no fight—that was murder. The dead one had the most sand in him too, ef only he hadn't got into sech an unfort'nit' position. We generally git a good half hour or more outer a fight like that. It was jest a clean case of murder."

Meantime the surviving bull stepped cautiously to the pool; it was stained with blood; he sniffed a little, and then drank, and with

burning eyeballs and lashing tail, wandered restlessly back to the plain.

"And now," said Colonel Magnus Bloomer proudly, "I have got a man in that corral yonder who is a-going to ketch and ride that bull!"

"This is sickening!" said one of the three women, rising hastily; "let us go home."

The third one of the group rose also half irresolutely, glancing first at one, then the other of her companions; but the one in the middle, the one with the pale and beautiful face, smiled as she laid a controlling hand gently on the first speaker's arm.

"Stay," she said; "that was disgusting, certainly. Why did you mind it? But we will see some really fine riding, I expect, by and by."

"You were always half savage!" exclaimed the other, not ill-naturedly—but she sat down.

"Do you ride, marm?" said the Colonel, bending over to the lady with the fine face.

"I ride—very well," she replied, without deigning to turn even a little in addressing him.

"Miss Dorne rides magnificently," said the first speaker, more good-natured and communicative; "but she has seen so many people mangled and tossed for her entertainment the world over that she has no more feeling than an obelisk!" The elder woman laughed as she spoke thus, looking down at the same time with unspeakable pride and affection at the lovely form beside her.

"I conclude, marm," said the Colonel, bending forward again, "that you have been roamin' amongst the effete monarchies of the old world?"

But now for the first time the waiting band struck up an imperious strain; a low murmur of expectation ran among the spectators, and two horsemen rode out gallantly upon the plain.

They were armed only with lariats. One of them had an air of desperate bravado; he shouted and swung the rope wildly over his head. The other, though he had advanced much nearer to the mad brute in the field before checking his horse, now rested quietly in the saddle, the rope half concealed on his arm.

Once he lifted his hat to the spectators. He had strange, light hair that made him conspicuous at that distance. Him, however, the bull seemed to avoid ; he rushed past him, charging at the more demonstrative foe.

The man threw his lariat out fiercely ; it missed, the bull was upon him, he turned and fled. Then was there a hot chase, amid the hootings of the excited multitude ; nevertheless a universal sigh of relief went up when the corral gates, for which the pursued man was making, opened and received him.

The victorious bull turned to the last occupant of the field. Savage with the success of vigorous onslaught hitherto, he rushed at once and desperately upon him. The man with the strange, light hair waited. There followed a series of manœuvres in horsemanship, most skilful, daring, and beautiful to witness.

The bull, foaming, bellowing, charging, pursuing, was baffled at every turn and with a grace that sat easily on the rider, as though he were practising gayly in a free field ; always the eye, keen, fearless, alert ; always the slender

form and graceful, light head rising erect out of every *mêlée*.

Miss Dorne's gray eyes widened and flashed. "That is glorious!" she said impulsively. "I never saw *riding* before!"

The Colonel heard and swelled visibly with importance.

The delighted mob had cheered again and again. "Enough! enough! Sandy," they cried, "he can't bluff you! Floor him, Sandy."

The alert rider instantly seized a point of vantage ground, threw out his rope, and the bull lay stretched upon the plain.

He dismounted and allowed his horse to gallop back to the corral. He loosened the bull from the fetters of the rope, and as the infuriated beast struggled to his feet, he threw himself lightly astride his back, and uncovered his head once more to the gaze of his enthusiastic audience. The bull, with stormy and vicious efforts to throw his rider, started at last on a mad gallop around the plain.

They passed so near the stand of people, Miss Dorne for the first time got a full glimpse

of the hero's face. The features were fine, as if chiselled ; that brave face was weary with sweat and dust ; the eyes — it seemed as though they glanced at her alone in passing — looked sunken and pathetic under the waving light hair. Miss Dorne flushed. "He is the handsomest creature I ever saw !" she whispered to her companion.

"Enough ! enough ! Sandy," cried the exultant crowd, "he can't throw you ! Floor him !"

The rider leaped from his seat, armed still with his lariat.

The bull, recovering his impetuous course, made a final plunge at him, but his feet were entangled in the rope. With a dexterity and strength that seemed superhuman the lithe rider had thrown him, and, with the rope tightening in his hand, he stood victorious in the field.

"You asked me for a definition of *courage* the other day," said Miss Dorne, turning with shining eyes to her brother ; "I think you have an example of it !"

"Aye, that was bravely done," he replied.

"What ! *he* brave !" exclaimed Colonel.

Bloomer. "Oh no, that's only just *cussedness*! We've got brave men, but Sandy Ferris ain't one of 'em. Lysander Gordon Ferris can stab a man in the back, sir! Lysander Gordon Ferris can worry a dyin' dog, sir! Oh no! We've got brave men, but he ain't one of 'em."

But Miss Dorne did not hear. She was watching the next scene in the play. A dove was buried in the earth, all save its head. Six horsemen now rode out on the plain, the light-haired hero among them. The play-bill announced that a prize of fifty dollars would be awarded to the horseman who, riding past at full gallop and leaning from his saddle, should first pull the dove's head from the earth.

The buried dove was cresting her soft head and looking about her with gentle and affrighted eyes.

"This is cruel! it is wicked!" exclaimed the eldest of the three women.

"It is cruel," said Miss Dorne, earnestly; "but see! the horsemanship is almost perfect."

One after the other they rode past, bending to the feat with wonderful agility. One man

had snatched some feathers and held them triumphantly aloft. They shouted, threatened, cursed as they rode, but the dove as yet lay safe.

The light-haired hero had waited his turn. As he pressed his horse on, Miss Dorne paled. She knew that the dove's soft, wild eyes had taken their last look at earth. With inimitable swiftness and grace he leaned from his flying horse: the bird's tender fluttering head was severed from its body. He held it an instant in air, and then tossed it disdainfully at the feet of his audience.

Now, Miss Dorne knew that he looked at her alone. Those bright, fierce, yet sunken eyes seemed to crave recognition of her. "For you I have done this!"

A strange feeling swept over her, almost of exquisite anguish, such as she had never felt towards any human being before. She hated and despised a being whom she adored!

Her head drooped. The dove's wild, dying eyes seemed still before her. She had lost heart for the play.

"Come," she said to her elder companion, "I am ready to go now."

Her brother laughed tenderly. "What, *you!*" he whispered. "But we must wait a moment until the field is clear. After the act which we now see approaching there is an intermission of a few moments. We will take advantage of it to escape."

A brute who had evidently disdained to appear voluntarily on the scene was being dragged upon it with ropes.

"That," said the Colonel, swelling profoundly, "is a horse that never has been and never will be broke by the hand of man. There ain't no point of cussedness that he ain't got. That horse, sir, had just as soon bite a man as kick him; he'd just as soon kick him as bite him. He's a bucker, a jumper, a runner, and a man-eater. It takes three men, as you see, to saddle him, though bound, and there's only one man in my show, sir—Lysander Gordon Ferris—that ever ventures to ride that horse."

Indeed, the saddle and bridle were adjusted to

the struggling animal as he lay bound and held to the ground.

The ropes were loosened one by one with the wariest caution. Again the light-haired hero stood ready. As he leaped to that treacherous saddle, the people watching, pale and intent, cheered him wildly. Miss Dorne hated them. In that moment an intense pity and tenderness filled her beating heart. But courage increased as the fearless rider sat the demon so easily. Whether he towered villanously on his hind legs, or drew his feet together in the process of "bucking," the horse could not dislodge the relentless hand that held his bit.

At length he started at a furious pace around the plain.

Some people, not admitted to the safety of the seats, stood in a group at the entrance, recklessly watching the play. The horse turned suddenly with some blind, insensate instinct of brutish rage, and charged directly upon them! It needed then a sharp and desperate throw of the bit, and that was given. The horse was thrown, but the rider lay underneath.

The outriders on the plain secured the brute with their lariats and dragged him away.

The people surged down from their seats with pale and awe-struck faces.

But the glorious rider did not rise again. At the feet of the audience he had delighted, dust on his pallid face, blood mingling with his sunny hair, he lay with wide and sightless eyes turned to the solemn mountains in the distance.

A BOLD AIM.

CHAPTER II.

A BOLD AIM.

LYSANDER GORDON FERRIS had committed a misdemeanor — a forgery — some said a more desperate act, — in the States. As a renegade from justice, mingling with the wild life of the West, he had recovered from many a worse blow than that received on the arena of yesterday. But he had a face that a tender mother might have despaired over and kissed. Women were kind to him.

As he looked up from the straw pallet where he lay in his tent, he saw Mrs. Bloomer's comely face. She stood in the open door of the next tent — the household tent — washing the break-

fast kettles. She wore a brown calico frock, without jewels.

Ferris put his hand to his head a moment as if recovering himself, then exclaimed cheerfully, "Good morning! Blandoline."

"Well!" said Mrs. Bloomer with a start; "so you've come to again, Gordon."

"Why, aren't you glad?" he replied. "I am—sort of—sort of." He looked at her wistfully. "Is there anything for me?" he said.

Mrs. Bloomer affected to laugh. "Why, yes, there's bacon and potatoes." Then she relented, and, wiping her fair hands on her apron, she brought in to him a bouquet of delicate flowers and an envelope containing a card, "Lucie Dorne."

Gordon's eyes flashed. He was a changed being in a moment. "That gives me liberty to call," he asserted exultantly to Mrs. Bloomer.

Mrs. Bloomer sniffed. "You are the devil, Gordon Ferris," she said, beaming not unkindly on him from her honest eyes. "You have promised to marry my Maggie, you know. On'y

I would rather see her dead and in her grave."

"Rather see Maggie dead than married to me? Oh, Blandoline! my handsome, my imperial, my incomparable Blandoline!"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Bloomer, blushing at the flattery, and yet speaking very frankly; "that I would; and as between yez and me it 'ud be far better for her, as that yez know right will, Gordon Firrus!" In excitement Mrs. Bloomer lapsed into a brogue.

"Very well, then," said Gordon; "I will marry some one who shall be, not so usefully domestic perhaps, but *grander*. Do you understand? She shall be paler, and yet as some would say handsomer. The eagle shall come down to dwell with the barnyard fowls. How if a lady of aristocratic birth and brilliant social degree shall come to help you with the kettles, Madame Bloomer?"

"You are the divul, Gordon Firrus."

"I must arise. Draw the curtains of my tent, sweet Blandoline."

Mrs. Bloomer, who had returned to her kettle, flushed warmly. Seizing a potato from some that were steaming in a kettle, she threw it at

him with deliberate aim. At the same time she drew the curtains of his tent to with a snap. "He's a bad biy that, and 'ud break his own mother's heart," she murmured : " though he's the winsome face o' St. Michael himself, the more shame to him ! "

When Gordon emerged from his tent, he was dressed with scrupulous taste and neatness. Mrs. Bloomer, with forgiveness in her heart, looked him over proudly. " But ye've not so much as the show of a pin on ye, Gordon," she remonstrated. " Borry the Colonel's watch and diamonds ; sure he'll never be missin' them the day."

" Thank you," said Gordon, seating himself at the table. " In the society with which I propose to mingle this morning, they don't sport celluloid watches, however large ; nor gems of paste, however brilliant. Thank you for the kind intention." He sat erect at the table, and ate as one who practised unconsciously the habits of fine breeding.

But Mrs. Bloomer's honest face glowed with genuine pain. " Ye're nasty enough to them as

does ye the least ill turn, the Lord knows, Gordon Firrus," she said; "and ye're just as nasty to them as bears ye a good heart." Gordon ate on quietly.

"Maggie is a sweet chick," he said to Mrs. Bloomer, as he touched his hat lightly to her in the door; "but I am for the eagle."

Miss Dorne was with a sister, much older than herself, and a brother and his wife. They had in fact been travelling in Europe, and were visiting now the remote parts of their own country. Their wealth and social distinction were indicated somewhat to the people around them by the fact that they had telegraphed for and occupied the "governor's suite" of rooms at the "Grand."

Gordon Ferris had no card. He sent up his name by the porter. "Mr. Ferris, the 'cow-boy' — the man she saw in the show," he said, simply.

After some moments he was summoned to a private parlor; it was empty. After he had waited half an hour longer, Miss Dorne walked with perfect self-possession and grace into the

room. She was languidly, sweetly, insolently slow, in her manner, her walk, her voice. On seeing Gordon, she paled only slightly. Her physical wealth and beauty impressed him as they could not have done yesterday. She looked tall to him, and even exquisitely robust. She was strong, queenly, beautiful, of the earth earthly.

As she spoke to him with gentle condescension, an insolent flush dawned in either cheek. Everything about her seemed insolent to him; he loved her — desired her — proportionately. He was mad, bewitched.

Despair had not often visited the breast of Gordon Ferris; it came there now. It had the effect of stinging him, as if with revengeful pain. He, the abandoned "cowboy" — he too had his birthright among these fine people. This gracious, disdainful woman, he might once have approached, with land and gold and the favor of a fair name in his hand.

He did not heed her words. He was ready to play a daring game. He rose and tossed the waving hair back from his forehead, as a lion

might have tossed his mane. His eyes were as splendid, as wild, as fierce. He too was beautiful.

"You have had many a lover at your feet, Miss Lucie Dorne," he said; "I shall not lie there —

"But I love you! Do you know how I love you? You shall know, for I will marry you! I am of birth as worthy as your own, Miss Dorne. I have been as well trained. I will redeem the past—but I shall marry you! For what I have set my hand to do I have never failed to do yet, Miss Lucie Dorne"—the thin, handsome nostrils quivered. "Do lovers bow at your feet back there? Do they whine and plead? Do they sigh and pine, when you refuse them? I have neither sighs nor prayers to make. I shall only marry you! If you refuse me,—I shall *take* you!"

Gordon bowed his pale face low as he finished. His was no dancing-school bow; it seemed the inherited grace of a proud line of ancestors. In the shape of his thin, brown hands, in voice, in bearing, he was a "gentleman."

Lucie Dorne stood with widening eyes; there

was in them the glorious passion and defiance of the hunted animal, there was the fear of the affrighted dove. It was the play over again.

But the fine lady had great self-control. "My lovers, Mr. Ferris," she said, breathing softly through her white teeth, "have been those of the nineteenth century."

"I am not that," Gordon replied; "I am of any century that is black and cruel,—but that keep their oath and word, Miss Lucie Dorne."

At that she smiled coolly upon him, fear and defiance still in her great, lovely eyes.

He threw himself at her feet. "I too have come, you see," he said. "But only to one woman! Deny me, spurn me, tread on me with your sweet feet, I will go away from you forever,—only tell me that you love me!"

His face, as he lifted it, had grown dark and sorrowful. "Hush!" she whispered; "I love you,—God help me! Do not touch me! What, *you*! whom I have only seen yesterday. Nay, forgive me. Do not touch me! Leave me."

The two were beautiful in their passion.

Only his eyes had an eager, unsteady gleam ; hers, in their pain of confession, were yet as proud and steadfast as the stars. He rose to his feet, trembling, humble, and bowed his head very gently over her hand.

"I would leave you forever, angel !" he said, "If that would give you peace. It is only in my love, sweet one, that you shall have peace."

So he left her. But, in the few days that followed before her departure, he sought her presence again and again.

Lucie's sister laughed. "Even the wilds furnish victims ; you have made a conquest of the athlete," she said.

Her brother rated her fondly. "Has the bold circus-rider made his morning call ?" But Lucie Dorne had been quietly married to Gordon in the meantime. He was to redeem himself and then claim her. She would be true to him, and they would keep their secret.

But the day before she was to leave Ogden with her friends—"And do you think, Lucie," he said, "that you are to leave me ? Do you imagine in earnest that I shall allow it !" His

manner expressed more than his words ; it was almost vindictive.

"Nay, Gordon," she said, laying her hand gently on his arm, "I do not desire it. They call me half-heathen," she added, laughing. "I think I am! I was always escaping boarding schools — riding horses! There was never enough in any life for me yet — enough shadow, storm, height, depth,—what you will, of tumultuous experience. I think it would take a torrent to satisfy me!"

Ah, Lucie Dorne!

"Only," she said presently, "my mother, my brothers, sister, — this will hurt them so!" There was a sob in the gentle voice. "But you are my husband! I loved you, as I have loved only you. It seemed so clearly the way for me to go. How could I do otherwise? And you will win back your good name, and more? Oh Gordon, if I thought that you would ever bring any shame to *them*, I believe I could *kill* you!"

"It is a passionate wife, surely," said Gordon, putting his arms tenderly around her. "I shall have my task taming so brave a creature. As

for your friends," he added superciliously, "high as they hold themselves, they shall yet be proud to own the name of Gordon Ferris."

"And if I 'run away' with you, Gordon," she said, her eyes shining through tears, "where are we to go? What are we to do? I have nothing, as you know. My last allowance," she continued, laughing, "is almost gone, and I shall never have another."

"I have won some prize money," Gordon replied, "and I can get more. Understand, that my wife is never to bother her head with those things, Sweet. And 'where will we go'? you ask me. Thousands of miles away from here, up in the farthest territory, there is a place that only *we*, a few people who belong together, know about, Lucie. It is the grandest place God ever made. There the waters rush over precipitous rocks, hundreds of feet high. The ocean is not far off; the river has a wild and angry way to make; so all those waters are ever complaining. There, in midsummer, are sad November days, when the sun goes down in wind and clouds over inaccessible

mountain peaks. The twilights are divine. The moon comes up, and all those dark waters are a flood of light, in the midst of their complaining. That is where I will take you for our 'honeymoon,' my Love."

Lucie Dorne's heart beat wildly as she put her hand in his.

**"THE SYMPATHY OF THE
BUSTED."**

CHAPTER III.

"THE SYMPATHY OF THE BUSTED."

AT Lastchance Junction, the houses — shanties, wind-torn, hastily erected of pine — stood all on the edge of the rocks. The Colonel's piazza even leaned a little over the edge. It was upheld by two seemingly slender props, and it was a favorite resort.

The Colonel himself had returned. "After you left me, Lysander," said he disconsolately, "misfortins hailed, my show went down." Colonel Bloomer's shining broadcloth, his tall silk hat, his sparkling jewels, all were gone. He wore a long linen duster and a childish, boy's hat that had the appearance of having been

picked up by the roadside. He tossed back this simple covering from his impressive brow, and let the wind sweep through his hair.

"What a retreat this is!" he murmured. "And I don't know why it is — but, however prosperous I may be back there, I never feel easy somehow unless I'm a-settin' out here on the edge of these rocks! with the Falls a-shoutin' in my ears, 'Return, ye busted! Welcome, welcome home, ye busted ones!'

"What," said the Colonel, "are all the booms of gold and silver and real estate, compared with the booming of them Falls! When they ask me, back there, 'Is there a boom in your place, sir?' I answers, 'There is. There is a boom sech as only God Almighty and a few others know about, sir. There is a mighty and a thundering and a everlasting boom, sir.' When they ask me, 'Where and what is Lastchance Junction the junction *of*?' I answers variously, according to my man. They are a-thinkin' of snortin' steam engines and the sectin' and intersectin' of railroads. But my soul goes back to this calm retreat, and I know that

the only 'junction' represented here is the Sympathy of the Busted.

"Mrs. Ferris, madam," said the Colonel hastily, "I beg your pardon! You are the only one here who has not experienced the despairin' sentiments of which I speak."

There was a star-like face in the group. It seemed a contented face enough. "Oh, but I am no exception to the rule, Colonel," said Lucie Ferris, laughing brightly. Many eyes went up to her admiringly. She was the 'grand lady' as well as the pet among them.

"Blandoline, my dear," said the Colonel; "you are well acquainted with the unfort'nit sentiments to which I allude. When I first met you, you was servin' out drinks at your father's saloon at Deadwood. That was the condition from which I lifted you, Blandoline."

"Well, you've lifted me high enough," replied Mrs. Bloomer, simply, "as far as bein' stuck up on the edge of a precipice goes. But I don't see what better off we are, and I'm sure the whiskey as I used to mix for ye was much better for ye than the kind ye've jest been a-drinking!"

"True, Blandoline," returned the Colonel, impotently, "true."

"Without goin' into particulars," he continued after a pause, "*you*, Lysander, are deeply familiar with them harrowin' sentiments alluded to. The history, or, I might say, the manner of busting, of 'most every one here is known to me. Many of them I consider honorable busts. But concerning you, Lysander Gordon Ferris, — if sech be indeed your name, we only know that you keep this side o' the Rockies !

"Cap'n Williams, — them forlorn sentiments goes to *your* heart. I have heard it remarked that your head is Shakespearian. It is. I may say in contemplation of them brains of yours, Williams, that Shakespeare ain't nowhere. But even the wisest fail —"

"Oh — ! You drunken fool," exclaimed the individual under discussion. He rose with a shrug of disgust and walked away. Some who might have expected soon to fall under the Colonel's category followed his example, sauntering off with an air of apparent recklessness.

"Grayface!" whimpered the discomfited Colonel, "poor Grayface! You, — you know them sorrowful sentiments."

A dog lay close at the Colonel's ragged shoes — a dog of noble breed, but a lank, scarred, pitiable creature. He was blind; there was something grand, as if of a more than human prescience, in his sightless eyes.

"You, Grayface," said the Colonel, patting him, "we all know how you busted. There ain't a man here that needn't feel proud o' sech a bust as that. When Luke Watson's shanty was afire, you leaped in and you brung the little girl out, Grayface, — and you ain't never seen since then.

"Singerlar about that dog," reflected the Colonel. "He always goes with the one that's most unfort'nit. The worse busted you be, the more he seems to think on ye. And he *knows*, ye see. Ef you was a rustlin' around in silk velvet, he'd know it just the same if your heart was busted and sorrowful, and there he'd be, jest naterally, alongside of ye."

It was regarded by the most as a humorous

spectacle, but even as the Colonel spoke, Grayface — the lank, the wretched — rose solemnly and walked over and lay down at the feet of Lucie Ferris. "Well, I'll be ——!" exclaimed the Colonel. "You've made a mistake this time, Grayface."

Lucie smiled as she bent down and stroked the sorry creature's head. But Gordon Ferris flushed angrily.

"You fool brute!" he muttered. "Come, Grayface!" he called cheerfully, recovering himself. "Come and have a play!" Grayface rose eagerly, wagging his tail. Gordon humored him, playing and dodging with him; he had lured him to the edge of the cliffs, but the sightless creature's knowledge of every shrub and stone of the way was wonderful. Gordon seized him, laughing, and held him over the abyss of waters.

A dozen bullets would have been put through him had he dropped the dog, and he knew it. But when he had lifted him back, Grayface, from where he stood, rigid, seeming to have shrunk in that hard moment already to half his natural

size, lifted to him eyes of such awful, unbelieving reproach as those who saw them never forgot.

"I was only playing. I wouldn't have teased the dog if I thought it would have hurt you, dearest." Gordon hastened to the side of his beautiful wife; she was white and trembling. Much latitude had been given him on account of this same sweet wife, but many an eye glanced evilly at him now.

"Thank the kind powers, thin, for here comes Father Marron!" exclaimed Mrs. Bloomer. "Magnus! Magnus!" she cried, addressing her dreaming spouse, "keep a still tongue in your head the while, dear, for here comes Father Marron!"

The priest, mounted on a sorry horse, came slowly up the defile. So, once every week, he came to visit Lastchance, from Gulch City five miles below.

The Colonel indicated obediently to Mrs. Bloomer his intention of holding his tongue. So slow was the father's progress that many lively comments concerning his own appearance,

and especially that of his horse, had passed among the group before he finally dismounted at the top of the ravine, fastened his horse, and appeared in their midst. He had a cast of countenance that was foreign and ugly. He sat down unsmilingly among them, and for some moments no one spoke. Then he turned very sternly to one of their number :

"Snohomish!" he said.

This was too much for Colonel Bloomer. "Now look a-here, Father," he said, "I've been goin' into this thing myself. I've jest been a fetchin' 'em up for their monkeyings as righteously as I know how. But ef you know anything against Snohomish, let it drop right here. Here he stays, summer and winter, rollin' logs for us ; he puts the bread in our mouths ; when we're sick he takes care on us ; when we're busted he welcomes us. And what's most singerlar, we ain't nary one of us ever trapped him in a lie. He *can't* lie, — him ! He's a singerlar creetur'. Now, I want this matter dropped right here."

Father Marron paid no attention to these

words, if he heard them ; he did not even turn his head.

"Snohomish!" he repeated sternly.

A dark man, singularly tall, sat on the steps of the piazza, not far from Lucie Ferris's chair ; his head was reclining against one of the thorny rustic pillars ; his face united great benignity with an expression so humble and sad that a child or a dog might have approached him. He lifted his clear, mournful, dark eyes to Father Marron's face.

"Well, Father?" he said.

"Snohomish," said the father, "you 'ave made confession to me, many a one of your sins, Snohomish,—but there is one thing you 'ave never tol' me. Listen, my chilleren ;" he swept them all with a grave glance.

"I have learn', never min' how : of time some long ago, in a re-gi-on far away from us, this Snohomish have a half-brother. He was reckless, wil'. He live with expense. Finally, in the place where they are trust' together, he appropriate, he take to himself, great monies. See!"

"Oh Lord," groaned the Colonel, "why don't you call it *stealin'*, Father? Yes, we have heered the term. I may say that we are not wholly unfamiliar with the term." Mrs. Bloomer gave her lord a withering glance; he nodded at her significantly and subsided again.

"He do the act," continued the father, as if he had not heeded the interruption; "but he have one cunning plan. He lay it to this older brother—this Snohomish—door. He have ready many evidence, to fault him. Snohomish, he say nothing, he take no step. Sure he might free himself. But he say nothing—he take no step. They are of family old, proud. He say nothing. He languis' in jail. Four year' he languis' in jail.

"He think sometimes maybe that brother livin' with expense abroad, he shall repent, he shall return, he shall free him. He do not so. Snohomish's hair has the white streaks in it fallen. His work of life,—he had great work, hope,—it is blast'. He is broken, despise'. He have not spoken. *It is Snohomish who is with you here to-day.*

"Chilleren, so did Christ, our great example, suffer wrong.

"So, being true, they yet mocked him as a felon.

"My chilleren, yon white peak afar that rises highes', above all, it have not yet, I understan', a name? Listen, my chilleren, then. I name it here before you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Mount Saint Snohomish — mountain of Suffering Truth.

"My chilleren, let us pray."

As he prayed, the Colonel wept audibly.

"And now, Father," he said, almost interrupting him in his haste; "who and where is this half-brother? Tell us that."

The priest bowed his head solemnly as he rose to depart. "What matter?" he murmured; "if he have return' and commit' another crime — or who he is, what matter! It is not ours, my chilleren, to punish — to revenge. It is ours to suffer and be true.

"Only this. When you would free yourself from penalty by a *lie*, remember that the burden mus' be borne somewhere. Where it may fall,

you cannot know. Will you free yourself, then, to lay it on the shoulders of some weak, moaning woman, maybe? Some one of the earth's suffering helpless? Some little chil'? May God have mercy on you! Beware! Injustice is for a little while: it shall be written on the Eternal Mountain of Truth."

As Father Marron rode down the pass, another horseman, much less sorrily mounted, met and saluted the priest with respect. As he neared the company at Lastchance, he waved an envelope wildly in their sight.

"That's Lon', from the telegraph office," said one.

These people had little correspondence with the absent members of their family. Telegrams came rarely, and usually indicated some legal or particular inquiry concerning some one of their number. A sort of pale panic seized them.

Snohomish, who had sat with bowed head ever since the priest spoke, stretched out his long arm as if for help, and laid his hand on Grayface's head; Grayface had returned to Lucie's feet:—

they understood each other, but he never followed *him*.

Ferris was deadly pale.

"Colonel! Colonel!" shouted the carrier, "this is for you!"

The Colonel arose and hastened to meet him in a wild and dissipated manner, as if all his limbs were at sea. As he read the telegram, however, he fell faintly back against the piazza for support.

"Lysander!" he gasped; "that old mine down to Yebbet, that we put a few chips in—they've—they've struck it rich! Lysander Gordon Ferris, you and me are worth half a million dollars!"

!

GOLD.

CHAPTER IV.

GOLD.

"LET us be cool and unpremeditated," said the Colonel; "cool and unpremeditated."

The breezes from the Atlantic now swept the Colonel's brow. He sat on the deck of the steamer in a rich upholstered chair, tied at the corners with ribbons of floating crimson; his glossy tile was pushed negligently back from his forehead; a watch of enviable proportions tried vainly to find a home in his waistcoat pocket, and the little finger of his right hand was encircled by a serpentine ring whose diamond eyes shot forth flames of no doubtful lustre.

"Let us be cool and unpremeditated," he said.

"I know," said the individual seated opposite him; "but if you can make two million out of a quarter of a million in a few weeks, you want to do it, don't you?"

The thoughtful attitude suddenly assumed by the Colonel surprised his inquisitor. Colonel Bloomer even sighed as he jingled vociferously the loose coin in his pockets.

"I don' know," said he, "as I do. How am I goin' to spend what I have got! When a man has got his pockets full, Mister Snelling, sir, what does he want of more? Wealth has its charms, it has its charms, but it has also its limitations, sir. It brings iysters on the half shell, but it brings tight boots and choker collars. Yes, it brings easy chairs and niggers and show — but a man can't so much as put a little Bermudy onion into his mouth with his knife, without a half a dozen o' them high-falutin women that there be on board a grinnin' at him as if he was a ostrich."

"Aha! my good sir," exclaimed Mr. Snelling, slapping him enthusiastically on the knee, "there you have it! You haven't got *enough*,

Colonel Bloomer. You haven't got *enough*! Once get enough and it don't make no difference what you do. Why, they'll all do it! Once get enough, you understand—and that's a great deal,—and instead of laughing at ye, they'll *all* be puttin' in Bermudy onions with their knives!"

"I don' know," said the Colonel, sadly. "Now, there's Mrs. Ferris—Lysander's wife,—she's be'n kinder ashamed of me and my family sence we come on board—and we see it. She's around all the time with them high-falutin folks, smilin' and pleasant enough, oh yes! but kinder makin' fun of us, don't ye see. Now Mrs. Bloomer and the girls was very kind to Mrs. Ferris, up to the Junction. They was very kind to her. They waited on her hand and foot."

"Aha! you mean that *distanga* lady, settin' over there with that Englishman. U-u-m. Wal', she ain't bad."

"No," said the Colonel; "that woman's got p'int about her. She's a high stepper. Only I'm kinder disappointed at the direction them p'int have b'en a takin' lately."

"That husband of hers plays like h —l in there, don't he! said Mr. Snelling. "They tell me he won five hunderd dollars in there yesterday! They say he's about cleaned out that purty German fellow, the one that wears the blue cap.

"And now, that's jest what I'm a-comin' to," continued Mr. Snelling, leaning over confidentially close, and speaking in an impressive tone; "he's a little unscrupulous that Ferris, maybe, eh? But he's *sharp*. Now he's a-goin' right solid into this concern of mine: he says he'll put every cent he's got in it, and wishes he had more. He's goin' to talk with you himself about it, by the way. He says he'd jest as soon have that invention in his hand as five millions cash. He can *see* it right there. Let's go and refresh ourselves a little, Colonel. Beautiful daughters, those of yours, Colonel!" murmured Mr. Snelling, as they walked away. "Beautiful! And yet after all I must give the palm to the mother!"

In the midst of the quiet voyaging dress of the people who surrounded them, Mrs. Bloomer and her daughters introduced to the deck, at varying seasons during the day, costumes of

such extraordinary richness and brilliancy as would have rendered the wearers grotesque but for the bloom and radiance of their own natural beauty.

Dalliance Bloomer, who wore trousers at home, bore the new order of things as bravely as she could either ride a horse or flourish a rifle. A burnished golden lizard fastened the scarf at her throat, but there was nothing treacherous in the young girl's eyes. Like her mother's, they were utterly frank and sincere; they feared nothing.

The group was constantly surrounded by male admirers, including some examples both of the American and English fop. "Let us go and guy Miss Dalliance," they were wont to say.

It is doubtful if Miss Dalliance ever was guyed.

"Look here," she demanded thoughtfully, in a voice which made no attempt to hide its own clear resonance of tone; "if one of you fellows knew a man that got another man put in jail for his own act, what would you do!"

"Go-to-school-to him to learn-how-to be

sharp," slowly drawled an American fop. His companions laughed.

"Should you!" said Dalliance Bloomer. "Well, I shouldn't! Some day I may find such a man, and when I find him I'm going to put a bullet through him. Savey?"

"Oh," exclaimed the namesake and incipient heir of Sir Humphrey Guest, putting his hand on his heart; "how I wish it might be me!"

"Why?" said Dalliance.

"It would be so sweet to die at your hand!"

"Humph!" said Dalliance, coloring proudly as she looked down at the small young man, "I shouldn't take the trouble to load up for you. I should only just *slap* you!"

Altogether it was a noisy quarter of the deck.

The Bloomers were scandalized by the persistent gaze of the senior Sir Humphrey and his lady, who sat under the awning opposite.

This amiable couple, who seemed to be singularly devoid of mental resources of their own, followed the female Bloomers about, it was observed, at a safe distance, as though they were a public spectacle or menagerie.

At times, when they became deeply absorbed in watching them, their comments became unguardedly audible.

"They are very curious, are they not, Humphrey?" observed Lady Guest.

"Curious! They're savages! they're lunatics!" snarled Sir Humphrey.

"Why do they run so to snakes?" said Lady Guest, regarding with fascinated awe a golden adder mottled with rubies that encircled Mrs. Bloomer's arm; "is it the national emblem?"

"No," said Sir Humphrey testily; "I believe that's a crow; some kind of a bird."

"I wish dear Humphrey would not follow them about so closely."

"Oh, they're not dangerous probably," said Sir Humphrey; "though I heard that one that they say wears breeches at home talking about shooting just now."

"Oh," shuddered Lady Guest, "Humphrey dear must be careful not to enrage them."

At the table, however, Sir Humphrey and his lady would fain not have been seated opposite the Bloomers, but they had been placed there.

at the beginning of the voyage. They regarded them, therefore, throughout their meals, even when they were staring them full in the face, as though utterly oblivious of their presence.

Mrs. Bloomer, who had made kindly concessions at first, grew bitter. Sir Humphrey as a type had a chronic expression as though he were about to cry out with rage.

On the third day, having been glared at in this insultingly unconscious manner through dinner: "Sir," said Mrs. Bloomer to Sir Humphrey at last, "*ye sour me food*. I wish yez would look the other way!"

Sir Humphrey would have done well to have regarded the national inflection of Mrs. Bloomer's rich voice. But he glared on; and shortly afterward, discussing the Irish affairs with his right-hand neighbor, "I should like to see them *hung*, sir," said he, "root and branch. I should like to see them hung."

Mrs. Bloomer grew fiery red. She had ever been awkward with the cistern of mineral water that stood at her right hand. Now, as she touched the syphon shakily, the water flew over

with an angry hiss full in Sir Humphrey's face, over his white dinner tie and immaculate shirt front.

"D—n you!" he cried.

"Sir," said Colonel Bloomer, rising; "I'll meet you on deck, sir."

He put his hand suggestively and imperiously to his breast pocket.

Colonel Bloomer was dragged away by Gordon Ferris and Mr. Snelling. His next appearance, by moonlight, on the deck of the steamer, was tranquil, even tearfully so.

"It's a noble invention," said he, taking, to that gentleman's vast surprise, a fellow countryman of ministerial aspect by the button hole; "it's *better* than gold,—put every cent I've got in it—wish I had more—of course don't use it for coining purposes—table ware—ornaments—solider than gold, hic!—yellowier than gold, hic!—don't tarnish like gold."

The perfect moonlight shone down on the great lake of God,—waves of solemn, crested glory, dark depths inscrutable. There was a cry at one end of the boat.

Some one overboard !

Who ? — a man ? a woman ? a child ?

It is that bright-eyed young German with the blue cap.

He lost, gambling. Had been in America ; had saved some money ; was going home.

Whom did he lose by ?

Never mind, it is no one's fault, since he would play. A gambler must take his chances.

Can they find him ?

They were going very fast ; they have stopped ; they are putting a boat back, see !

They never found him. It was very still on the deck after that. Colonel Bloomer pulled himself together. Genuine tears fell down his cheeks as he gazed back at the white wake of the ship.

"Ah," he murmured brokenly to himself, "he wasn't cool and unpremeditated enough."

Gordon Ferris came into his wife's state-room.

He had a look on his face which she had seen there before, — as a child might look to its

mother, frightened, white, questioning. Still he adored her, loved her passionately.

Ah, Lucie Ferris, how will you deal with that weak, lost soul,—you, in your conscious pride.

“This is a new order of things—a new experience, surely, for a Dorne,” she said, curving her proud lips coldly.

“It is an order of things that is bringing us lots of gold, Lucie,” he exulted over her, pleaded over her, with desperate triumph. “When we get to the other side we shall be worth half a million instead of what we have now! I have arranged with Mr. Snelling for a paltry sum. We are planning to have the Colonel’s fortune added to mine. He is utterly incapable of managing it, and”—

“And you dare tell *me* this!” she interrupted him, standing away from him, her cold, mocking, beautiful smile withering him with its contempt.

What need she fear, a woman of so noble and proud a family, she who had met with only tenderness, reverence, from mankind. The bril-

liant smile did not change, nor the contemptuous brave eyes swerve from him. "Thief! scoundrel!" she said clearly, coolly.

Gordon Ferris sprang forward with an oath. He struck her to the ground.

SOME HOMELY METAL.

CHAPTER V.

SOME HOMELY METAL.

“AH, she is so *distrain*—*distingué*—the American lady, the one with the scar on her forehead. Her husban’—ah, he is so devote’; those dear American gentlemen, are they not charming?”

The table at the *pension* in the Avenue Kléber was long and populous. Madame Dubois, with her seat-mate, was discussing Lucie Ferris.

Mrs. Bloomer, at still another part of the table, having finished her repast, was about to make egress from the dining-room. Something in the French *chic*—the plain elegance—of

Madame Dubois's back led her to mistake that individual for Lucie Ferris. So she stooped down, in passing, and whispered in her ear with tender familiarity :

"These Frenchwomen eat enough for six!" — and then sailed on in splendid innocence.

"Ah — fool! heavy one! *elephan'*! RHENOCessaros!" shrieked Madame Dubois after her.

But Mrs. Bloomer's unconscious and imperial form had already disappeared through the doorway.

Madame Dubois's shrill laugh soon subsided, however. "Ah, gauche!" she murmured; "she is one innocent! What matter! Those dear Americans — they are un-englis'. Behold, they have the good heart. I am for them."

"Are they of the Americaine élite?" inquired her companion.

"Ah, *oui, oui!* mos' sò!" responded Madame Dubois, with the air of one giving wide Transatlantic information in an appropriate tongue; "they 'ave their 'abitation on the Five Avenue!"

The Bloomers would fain have gladdened the metropolitan hotels with some hint of their prosperity and worldliness, but the Ferrises had over-persuaded them to quiet retreats.

Their stay in London had been brief. At the select boarding place where they were, a retreat composed entirely, as they found, of elderly British females, profoundly national, Mrs. Bloomer had pined until the savage in her was roused.

The food was cold and remorsefully insufficient. The inebriate and palsied son of the hostess essayed to carve. Mrs. Bloomer, who sat at his right hand, was daily sprinkled with meat and gravy. She laid two beloved costumes away tenderly, but the ruin of the third overcame her.

She took advantage of the occasion itself to exclaim across the table to her hostess, "Madam, though I get nothing to ate at the table at all, sure I have a plenty off me gown when I get up stairs!"

Having gone thus far, it was but a step further to observe that she had always supposed "toast" was something warm.

This, with a stroll through the Tower and Westminster Abbey, where the Colonel contracted a quinsy, finished their explorations in London, and they set out forthwith for the sunny delights of Paris.

There the Colonel's recovery was rapid. Madame Dubois, evidently an old habitu   of the house, had just returned from a winter at Nice, where, in a house also occupied by many of the "Englise," she had witnessed the entertaining ravages of an earthquake.

Her room adjoined the apartments occupied by Colonel and Mrs. Bloomer, and the partitions were friendly and thin. As her acquaintances called one after another, she recounted the tragic experience of the winter in a manner so lively, illustrated with chairs, with tables, with all available articles of furniture,—with high notes of affected English, with salient flashes of wholly un-English wit, with screams of laughter from her delighted audience, until, as the Colonel said, "The earthquake itself couldn't 'a' been no better."

The tale was varied with the endless wit

and resource of the narrator. During his convalescence, the Colonel used to sit and listen with delectation on his poor white face.

"It's as good as a play, ain't it, Blandoline?" he said.

"It's better," said Mrs. Bloomer contentedly; "there ain't no trouble with hearin', and the chairs is aisier."

Finally they also knocked at Madame Dubois' door. The good soul ignored the slight breach of etiquette. She received them with effusion. "Ah, the dear Americaines! I adore them. Be at home."

She received a grand though futile attempt at salutation in French from the Colonel with the softest humility.

"Ah, pardonne! but I sp'ik so little Frensh, Monsieur. I prefaire Englis'. Not'ing to learn Englis', oh, not'ing! No gah-maire in Englis', no e-aig-u-alities."

Madame had heard that the Americans were *religieus*: "I t'ink we ought all to love God," she proceeded at once and gayly. "Oh, mos'

certainly! I adore those conversation — of good t'ings, and the future-to-come."

Finding that the Colonel and Mrs. Bloomer received these devout sentiments quite blankly, she continued in the same breath :

"*Mais*; all the sem'. You was in London maybe on the Sab't' Day? Is it not! *Mon Dieu*! I t'ink it is too long: I t'ink it is not lively; I say it is too sad. That is not me!"

Madame had observed that the Bloomers were rather neglected by their companions. She invited them to the Hippodrome. It chanced, that very afternoon, that one of the trainers had his arm snatched by a tiger; the trapeze performances also were of a new and startling order.

"There may be other shows in town," said the Colonel sententiously, "but this is good enough for me!"

He attended regularly, usually accompanied by Mrs. Bloomer. It was after a matinée performance, as they were driving in the Bois de Boulogne, that they recognized, in a luxurious landau with flashing horses, their old enemies of

the steamship, Sir Humphrey and Lady Guest. Lady Guest put up her eyeglass curiously as she passed them.

"*I'd rather die right here, Magnus,*" said Mrs. Bloomer, "*than not pass them again.*" The Colonel tingled with the same emotion to his very boot tips.

"Come! get out of this!" he yelled, punching the driver with his cane; he held a shining gold piece in his hand. The driver nodded; still he did not understand. The Guests were gaining.

"Pass-y! Pass-y vous them!" cried the Colonel, springing up and seizing him by the shoulder, while he pointed wildly ahead with his forefinger. "Pass-y vous them! Quick! Com-prenny vous, d — you!"

The driver understood; he lashed his horse into a run. Mrs. Bloomer was pale and triumphant as she swept past Lady Guest. After all there was hardly need of so much haste. Aristocratic wheels travel laboriously and slowly. The Bloomers were soon out of sight. It was evident to the spectators that the driver was

now trying in vain to check his horse; they were being run away with. But the Colonel and Mrs. Bloomer leaned back undisturbed in the cabriolet.

"I shouldn't think nobody'd ever gone out of a walk here, before," said the Colonel, referring to the excited attention of the bystanders. Nor did they realize the full importance of the situation until they picked themselves up from a confused medley of horse, driver, and cabriolet by the roadside, unharmed except for considerable dizziness, and with the satisfaction of knowing that Sir Humphrey Guest and his lady were far behind.

They had lost, however, the magic card which had hitherto conducted them home, bearing their street and number.

"It's a *ru*, ain't it, Magnus?" said Mrs. Bloomer.

"No," said the Colonel, pompously to the last. "I think it's something wider than a *ru*. I think it's a bool-var'."

These indications not being sufficient, however, to guide them home, even with the aid of

the interested bystanders, they wandered off a little disconsolately. But an hour later found them seated on a bench in the Champs Elysées, watching a truly animated French representation of the domestic annals of Punch and Judy, with countenances undimmed by the least trace of weariness or anxiety.

There when Madame Dubois found them as she was returning from her shopping, something in the eager gratitude of their gaze as they recognized her, led her to embrace them fervently as she called them her "poor los' leetle ones!"

When Lucie Ferris returned from a drive that evening, she entered her room to find Gordon sitting by a table, his head bowed in his hands; he was asleep. When he became aware of her presence, he started up as if from a feverish dream. The ease and dissipation of his life of late had changed his looks a little unpleasantly. He began to pace restlessly up and down the room.

"Lucie, I have lost all!"

The cool unconcern of her face incited him proportionately.

"We are beggars!" he cried. "Do you understand that? I mean it. Absolutely *beggars*!"

"Well?" said Lucie, with a calm interrogation, "we have been thieves."

"Good heavens, woman!" cried Ferris, "do you care nothing that we are reduced to penury; that we have not enough to get home with? Have you no thought for me, for yourself, for your unborn child?"

If she would only have turned to him with the old flash and gleam of white teeth, of angry eyes! It seemed as though she could hardly be brought to look at him of late.

"You hate and despise me, of course," he continued with bitter exasperation. "You show that plainly enough. Why did you ever marry me, then?"

"God knows!" said Lucie Ferris, solemnly. "I have been thinking more about those things lately." She laughed; she did not look at him, leaning wearily back in her chair, a tender, black distress in her eyes. "Maybe I have been a careless woman; maybe He has taken me in hand!"

"He will find a tough customer," sneered Gordon Ferris.

"He — will — find — a — tough — customer," slowly repeated Lucie.

"I do not envy Him His task."

"He will not depute it to you, Gordon."

The man looked at her. She was more beautiful than ever. There had come to her, what should have been a great hope; a heavy despair instead; a fear, holy; an unspeakable wonder, like the waves of a sea, calling, yet afar off, dim. He watched the strange softening of her face — but it was not for him! She was his by all the laws of man; he had exulted proudly over the possession: he had held her in his arms; he had struck her cruelly. And now, as he stood and looked at her, he realized in some strange sense that he had never touched her! could never touch her! He turned away with an angry sigh.

"Has Colonel Bloomer, too, lost all?" said Lucie, rousing herself.

"All! It's all gone! That scoundrel Snelling!" — Gordon muttered curses between

his teeth—"he's cleared with it all, except what I lost at play. It was that poor fool jumping overboard! Curse it! My luck has failed me ever since." He buried his face in his hands,—lean, restless, convulsive hands. He was more pitiful than a child, for he lacked by so much that stainlessness.

Lucie Ferris rose and went over to him.

"Gordon," she said, "do you remember how you conquered the beasts in the show? There was not one of them that you were afraid of. That was not half so hard as to conquer the evil and stormy passions within us! Are we going to lie down, slain, in this battle, because it is so much greater? My husband"—

He lifted to her the helpless, questioning face she knew so well.

"I care so much for the mother, the family, whose hearts I have broken and wronged. I care so much—for my unborn child; if I could know that we would strive to live a better life henceforth,—that you would be honest, upright, with me truthful,—there is nothing I could not, would not, do to help and save you.

See, I would work for you with my hands. I will do anything, bear anything."

She was speaking rapidly; her eyes were burning, eloquent. Ferris knelt down in their light; his lips trembled.

"Lucie, I swear that from this time, now and forever, I will be an honest and true man and husband to you. I swear it! Before God, I swear it!"

They went in together to the Bloomers.

Gordon was shaken, revengeful, as he told the tale of their ruin. "Curse him!" he muttered of Snelling; "he has ruined us!"

"Well, now, don't give up heart, Lysander," said the Colonel; "don't give up heart!"

He reflected a little, but there was no sign of faltering on the Colonel's noble and placid countenance.

"After all," said he, "this 'll make us foot-loose again. Hum! Yes, this 'll bring us back to old Lastchance. After all, there's been such an — such an infernal sense of security about traveling this way, somehow. Yes, I can hear the old Falls again, a callin' 'Return, ye

busted ! Welcome, welcome home, ye busted ones ! ' "

Mrs. Bloomer and the girls had drawn near to Lucie Ferris. " We don't mind," they said ; " we're used to it ; but it will be so hard for her. Isn't there enough so that it can be put together somehow, so that Mrs. Ferris won't have to suffer ? "

Lucie Ferris blushed ; tears filled her eyes.

The Colonel had always had a predilection for carrying as much as possible of his property in realized gold in his pockets. It proved a lucky formula in this case ; he produced nearly two hundred pounds. The most of this he pressed upon Gordon.

" You'll have to make tracks for the mountains, you know, Lysander," he said frankly ; " it won't do for you to get nabbed now. You must get up to Lastchance with Mrs. Ferris. We shall have to separate at New York," he continued ; " there ain't enough to get us all home ; but the rest of us 'll work our way back in no time. We shall get there ! "

"But you haven't saved enough to take you to America, Colonel," said Lucie.

"There's more ways than one of getting back to America," said the Colonel, winking jocosely. "There's more parts than one to a ship! Eh, Blandoline?"

"Yes; and I'd rather," said Mrs. Bloomer warmly, standing tall and stately, and looking with great tenderness at Lucie.

Lucie Ferris knelt down by poor Colonel Bloomer and kissed his hand. She sobbed with her wet eyes pressed against Mrs. Bloomer's neck.

DYNAMITE PASS.

CHAPTER VI.

DYNAMITE PASS.

"SNOHOMISH advised that you must come to Lastchance at once, Ferris; he strongly advised it."

Captain Williams, under his heavy, reddish eyebrows, had a level gaze that never flinched; whether he was consulting the individual or the landscape, it was alike imperturbable.

"Snohomish," he continued, "seems to have got hold of information somewhere that has led him to think it will be discreet for you to come to Lastchance at once, Ferris. In fact he advised it."

The Captain's direct gaze at Ferris expressed more than his words. Gordon looked towards his wife, who was sitting in the door of the tent with Mrs. Williams. The sun in going down over the cañon made soft lights and shadows on her thoughtful face. Instinctively he followed the direction of her eyes to the grand and mountainous solitudes beyond,— where in the everlasting rocks God has carved for Himself tabernacles whose sublime architecture no man can follow, nor attempt to follow,— bold castles, ruins, defences, of the Infinite — peaks that reach the sky, towers that laugh at all human ambition ; as though God Himself moved in that wild place, saying, " This death is not much to fear, and life — speak, if thou knowest, what is life ? —but bind thy dying soul to the Truth, and live with Me for evermore."

Gordon shuddered restlessly as he turned away.

"Why were all the white paths closed to him !"

"So Snohomish has *advised* that I return to Lastchance, has he ?" said he doggedly ; "how

in —— was Snohomish supposed to know that I should be at Dynamite Pass?"

"Only this," continued the Captain, in his cool, inflexible monotone: "there are communications now and again between Gulch City and New York. If Snohomish heard of your arrival with the Bloomers, he would know the rest. He would know of course the direction you would take—he knows our old haunts; he would know too"—a grim smile illumined the Captain's face for an instant—"that however much money you might have started with, Ferris, it would only last you half-way. We are alike in that. Mary and I started for Denver, and here we are, half-way, at the old camp at Dynamite."

"Yes," said Mrs. Williams, bridling, "but Cap'n hasn't told how he lent two hundred dollars, on the way, to a consumptive man that was trying to get to California with his family."

Mrs. Williams did not resent any personal inconvenience, but she idolized the Captain.

Captain Williams looked at his pretty young wife with grim humor.

"Madam," said he, "children should be seen and not heard."

"I don't care," said Mrs. Williams; "Cap'n's always running himself down. Do you know what Cap'n did?" she said, turning to Lucie Ferris. "I don't think it was so very bad."

"Good — almighty! woman," said the Captain with stoical incredulity, "are you going to tell?"

"I just am," said Mrs. Williams. "Cap'n went into partnership with a Jew, and Cap'n had seventeen thousand dollars, and the Jew had seventeen thousand dollars, and in a few days the Jew had thirty-four thousand dollars and Cap'n hadn't a cent. Wasn't it so, Cap'n?"

"Go on, madam, go on," said the Captain, now with iron equanimity.

"And so Cap'n met the Jew in the woods, and Cap'n said 'If you'll sign to give me back my seventeen thousand dollars that you've got, it's all right,' and the Jew wouldn't anyway; and so Cap'n had a club, and Cap'n——. Didn't you, Cap'n?"

"I did, madam," calmly replied the Captain.

"And I never thought it was so very bad," said Mrs. Williams ardently; "that Jew just lied to him and got him in a net. Cap'n comes of good family, too — don't you, Cap'n? — one of the very richest down South. And Cap'n heard his mother was very low — she's always been fighting with all her *good* children, — and Cap'n didn't know but now she might forgive him, and leave him a present. Didn't you, Cap'n?"

"Certainly, madam," responded the captain.

"And that's why we were getting just a little nearer East, in case of possibilities."

There was a bright fever in Mrs. Williams' fresh cheeks.

"Have you concluded, madam?" said the Captain drily, but never unkindly. "Speaking of affairs, Ferris," he resumed, "it would be awfully dull here now without you and Mrs. Ferris, I needn't say; but as I told you the other day, Snohomish wouldn't have been so imperative unless he'd heard of something agitating in your case. I've already earned something, and I can get enough more from the boys at the camp to take you on."

Gordon looked again at his wife. How fair she was — never so fair before. What might it be for a man to stand with her, beloved, honored, respected of mankind, the worthy husband of her queenly womanhood, and with hope in his fair race!

“Damnation!” he muttered, springing up, “am I to be hounded over the country as if I were a criminal! Let Snohomish chew his own cud — he lies! Let any man dare to touch me, and I’ll show him whether he has any ground for accusing me or not. I’ll ——”

“You will, will you, Ferris,” said a placid individual who had just sauntered up to the doorway. The group recognized one of the boys from the camp — a tall, broad-shouldered, pleasant fellow, Charley by name.

“I’ve been down in this camp about a month now, laying for you, Ferris, and I’m very glad to find you. I represent in an official sense the firm of Salters & Co., whom you relieved of a good deal of superfluous responsibility of affairs some time ago. I am under the painful duty of arresting you, ‘Lysander Gordon Ferris.’”

Pity ! oh man ; see that woman's face in the doorway.

But Lucie's dilated eyes were fixed on Gordon, where he sank, gasping, quivering, into his chair, as if torments whitened and racked his flesh.

Lucie darted such a glance at the detective as a tigress at bay might have given, — wild, defiant, murderous. She swept over to Gordon and took his sinking head in her arms. "My poor boy," she murmured, "my love ! my love ! How you have suffered ! how unfortunate you have been. But they shall never harm you. Why do you fear ? I will die first. How tired you are ; rest here in my arms. Are not my arms soft as they hold you ? They are very strong — they are stronger than death. My love ; my poor love, there is nothing to fear."

As she spoke, her wild eyes never left Charley's face — beautiful tigress eyes ; the proud, passionate, brooding face ; the soft hand stroking that poor head in her lap ; her pathetic, awful situation.

Charley looked on mutely.

"He has been so kind and good always," she pleaded, "and he is very brave; he has been so unfortunate. What good will it do you or them to take him now? And it will ruin him. He has changed; he is doing right. Sometime if he can he will make all those things right. Is it not better to let him try? Is there any reason, think you,—is there any reason why you should not crush him here to-day?"

Not so could Lucie have pleaded for herself. The straining, uplifted eyes, still fixed on Charley's face, darkened and filled with tears.

Charley stood motionless.

The Captain turned from the kneeling woman to the detective.

"Look here, Charley," he said, "let's cut this thing short. You've been in the jungle a long while, and you don't want to lose your prey. All right; I can give you as good a one as the other, with as big a bonus on his head. You remember Lampson that murdered Dan Dusembaum just this side the line, some years ago? Well, here he ——"

"Cap'n!"

Young Mrs. Williams stood with a revolver levelled straight at Charley's unblinking blue eyes.

"You touch Cap'n," said she, "and *I'll fire!* And you know there ain't a man at the camp that's got a surer aim than I have, Charley Detective. Come on!"

"Is there a place here somewhere where I can sit down a moment?" said Charley. "I'm exhausted. Anything to drink, Captain? Thank you! Your health!"

"For a small crowd, it seems to me that you're the gamiest d—d lot here I ever tumbled into. You're altogether too gamey an enterprise for me! Thank you, Captain — this is refreshing.

"Captain," said Charley, rising to depart, and making a drawing-room bow, "I am proud to have had the honor of knowing you! Mrs. Ferris, my heartfelt admiration and sympathy! Mrs. Williams, you are the worthy spouse of your husband; angels could say no more! Farewell! I've lost lots of good powder — but if anything comes to trouble you up here, be sure it won't be through me."

So the sun rose and set again for happy hearts over Dynamite cañon, happiness all the sweeter to the Captain for perils escaped, for dangers, maybe, to come. He and Gordon alternated short hours of rolling ore at the mines with longer hours of bear-hunting in the cañons. Gordon grew handsome, masterful, again, bringing home the conquered slain on his shoulders.

Lucie Ferris and Mrs. Williams tramped daily to Cañon Lake and there fished faithfully from the morn to the early sunset, selling part of their wares to the miners on their way home.

In the evening they broiled bear's meat and trout for their hearty lords, and sat at a bare table that was brilliant with health and merriment. They had the color of roses, in the most elastic air that inhabits our continent.

Then one day the Captain came up from one of his cautious adventures to the nearest town — the Springs.

Not a letter this time, but a little white box, by express probably. Mrs. Williams jumped for joy as she embraced Lucie.

"I know it," she cried; "I know it!"

But the Captain's face expressed nothing. He lit a cigarette and sat down by the table, tapping the unopened box with his small, hairy, but invincibly strong fingers.

"I wrote mother," he said, in that even, phlegmatic tone which no man dared question, "that I was repentant."

The Captain looked over the group with his grim eyes, but every one seemed deeply impressed with a sense of the Captain's softened state of mind.

"I *am* repentant," said he sternly. "I might be doing a man's work in the world instead of taking the part of a fugitive. I have made fortunes for myself: I have made more than one fortune for other men. I have trusted men — that was my impulse always — what can a man do? I have been swindled again and again. When I found out that a man had cheated me, lied to me, my first impulse always was to brain him. At last I did it.

"Only, in braining him I didn't brain him but myself! I did him the greatest honor of

his life — but I brained myself ; a pure mind, a good name, a place among men, wealth, honor, manhood, I brained them all, dead !

“That is what we do, Ferris, when we rob other people, either of their money or their lives. Better stick to manhood, though we sink ; depend on that. Well, I wrote mother that I was repentant, that I pitied and loved her, which is true. Poor old mother ! she had a sneaking fondness for me, always. She couldn’t put me down in the will with the rest, but she managed this for me. See !

“Forty thousand dollars ! not a bad day’s haul ! Lucie, Gordon, I claim you ! You are all my family.”

Mrs. Williams hung ecstatic on the patient Captain’s neck.

“Are you going to invest any of it, Tommy ?” she said.

“Good heavens, woman, no !” said the Captain sadly ; “I shouldn’t have it then !”

“And we’re going to spend it *all* ?” cried Mrs. Williams, with eyes of unbelieving joy
“Where shall we go ?”

"We shall see, madam, we shall see. Compose yourself. Is that the only pinafore you've got?"

"Yes, and I've carried fish in it until it's a sight."

Mrs. Williams rushed over to Lucie again, as though she would smother her with embraces.

"We won't have to catch fish for a living any more, darling, and you just won't have to worry about anything, you sweet old girl! And if you don't come with us and share it, we'll throw it into the pond!"

NOB HILL.

CHAPTER VII.

NOB HILL.

IN a luxurious drawing-room in the vicinity of "Nob Hill," San Francisco, Lysander Gordon Ferris was painfully striving, with the assistance of the pattern in the carpet, to make his way across the room to some bourne beyond.

It was as usual, since Captain Williams had rented the house two weeks before, a night of revelry. The rooms were gorgeously alight, and full of gay company. Champagne corks made merry music; but meanwhile in the pauses of the dance the band discoursed most plaintively. The reckless, the gay-hearted, the abandoned, they most of all love sad music.

Pausing and steadying himself in each velvet flower of the carpet as he advanced, Gordon at length sank down on a sofa and heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Made it out—didn't I? Mish Williams," said he, dimly discerning through the haze who his companion was.

"My! Gordon Ferris," said Mrs. Williams, opening her merry eyes at him with some astonishment; "*ain't* you drunk!"

"Somsh, yes," said Gordon, a little despondently; "that champagne 'dul-'dul-'dulterated I expect; drink any 'mount o' good whishkey. Why, any drunker'n the resh you think, Mary?"

"Not much, oh no! But I'd keep still just a little while, Gordon. Don't mortify Lucie. Keep still, that's a good fellow."

"Lucie wont shpeak to me!" said Gordon with drunken indignation; "goin' to make her shpeak to me before I get through!"

"Hush! you mustn't," said Mrs. Williams. "Look here, I'll have Johnson take you out if you do."

"A' right," said Gordon. "Know who that ish my wife's talkin' with?"

"No."

"That's Sham Myers; good fellow, Sham; goin' to smash his head!"

"You keep still," said Mrs. Williams, warningly.

"Got a glash eye, Sham has; thinkhs he fools everybody. Won fifty dollars from him at the cock-fight lash Shunday, anyhow."

"You keep still."

"Pretty shrew' plan, our coming up here—eh? Who'd ever think o' lookin' for Tom Lampson and Sandy—no-you-don't—in San Francisco, up on Preshbyterian Hill?"

"Hush!"

"A' right; tell you somethin' amushin'. Yesh'day, Cap' met Sham in the park. Sham was drivin' tandem, one horse ahead of the other, sho!" Gordon grasped two chairs and put them in position. "Pretty soon Cap' went out and come back with three horses, one ahead of the other, sho!" Gordon staggered, and placed three chairs in position.

"Never mind the chairs — I understand; go on."

"Can't tell it without shairs," said Gordon sadly.

"Yes you can. Go on, or I'll call Johnson."

"A' right. Pretty soon Sham went out and came back, four horses one ahead of the other.

"Pretty soon Cap' went out, came back five horses one ahead of the other.

"Lil' while Sham went out, came back six horses one' head the other.

"Lil' while Cap' went out, came back *seven* horses 'head th' other."

"Honest? Gordon."

"Honest and true! Wish I may die!"

"Which won?"

"Cap' won. Got shpilled, though; tol' me not shay anythin' 'bout it. Cap's gone to Oakland to buy some horses to-day; tol' me he should be back lash train. Hope there ain't anythin' happened to Cap'."

"Why, what should happen to Captain!" said Mrs. Williams, turning to him sharply.

"Don' know — hope not," said Gordon, his

head sinking back now rather heavily ; "tol' me he should be back lash train."

"Ugh ! You're so drunk you make one low-spirited," said Mrs. Williams, rising in a rich lustre of silk and diamonds. "You're positively idiotic to-night, Gordon. Stay right where you are, mind." But Gordon had sunk into a drunken sleep, and was little likely to disobey.

Soft strains of music ! prayerful, vague to the glittering sense that filled the room, and yet desired of those wild hearts ; as though away back in some dim room of memory, where evening shadows creep, a mother knelt once more beside her pure and white-robed child !

Ah, lost dream ! lost world ! Play madly now the music a little while. Warm the blood back, bound the sinking heart again with the dance.

What emotions lay behind the proud, high-bred mask of Lucie Ferris's face no one guessed. She sat watching another scene. From a room where the clatter of dice prevailed, several men stepped out into the more brilliant light. They

seemed trying to hush one of their number, who was flushed and gesticulating. Lucie recognized in him a noted youth who had recently discovered a fortune in a day. He was dark, handsome, though unhandsomely low-browed, curly-haired, red-lipped, as if he had just stepped from an Italian canvas.

"You say I care for monies!" he cried, "and so I do not play! I do not care for monies, but I do not play. You shall see how much I care for monies!"

He fixed his brilliant, flashing eyes heroically on Lucie. He took a roll of bank notes from his pocket and tore them into many pieces, scattering them.

"So much I care for monies!" he cried contemptuously. He took a note, on the face of which the "Twenty" dollars was plainly visible, and, lifting it to the gas-jet, lit a cigar with it, the while it shrivelled into ashes.

"So much," he said, tossing the cigar aside, and making a low bow of apology, "so much I care for monies! Thus much I care for monies!" He took another roll and threw

them, scattering them broadcast over the room. "See, all of you, how much Israel Bissio has love of monies!"

Lucie rose from the gleam of his eyes, and walked to the window. It was moonlight. Outside, some guests of the evening, waiting for their carriages, were dancing, meanwhile, a merry polka on the pavement. They stopped suddenly, she remembered. Three men came up the paved hill bearing a burden.

Did they know so soon within, then? No; the room was full of laughter, but the dancing had ceased. That strain again! — the dim, lost years returning; the evening shadows, trustful, childish-sweet with weary prayer! Faces — oh wonder! lost faces sweet! Lucie could not shriek, as the rest did, when the Captain was brought in. A fierce, impious pang of envy pierced her breast in that instant: the stern, scarred face had such great peace upon it now; the grim, kind eyes closed for evermore upon that aching light, on tears, on wrathful scenes, on black deceit.

She heard them say he had been murdered,

left by the side of the hill. It was often quite dark there, too dark; the city should look to it. The robbers must have known that the oft-defrauded captain carried all his money with him, buttoned safe in an inner pocket. He was very strong — stronger than three; they attacked him suddenly, no doubt, overpowered him by foul means; perhaps brought him there dead in a carriage, and left him; no one knew, alas!

Mary Williams knelt and kissed the lips of death passionately, then raised her eyes to Heaven:

“Dearest,” she said, “I swear here to avenge you! No one else will find your murderer. They will try, but they will fail.” A bitter smile flashed over her face. “I have no money now. They might fail, anyway — they would fail. But love cannot fail! Love will avenge you!”

"FATHER, WHAT IS LIFE?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"FATHER, WHAT IS LIFE?"

IN a rude, unsightly little structure which the cross surmounted, in Gulch City, Snohomish knelt at the confessional.

The mountaineer's broad hand, scarred with labor, rested on the altar-rail. His face—nobly-featured one saw as he lifted it,—in spite of its strange benignity and his whitened hair, had a rare look of youth upon it, an almost boyish eagerness and purity.

Father Marron mumbled over the words of the decalogue: "Hast thou been guilty of stealing? Hast thou been guilty of telling lies?" Father Marron was often kind, it was

said. His manner was never kind with "Mount Saint Snohomish."

"Father," said the mountaineer, his dark eyes piercing the priest with sadness, "I love my brother's wife!"

"I shall not ask you, Snohomish," said the priest, "whether she returned your sinful affection, for in such case it is not you who would have loved her! I shall not ask you whether, being another's, you told her of your love, for in such case you would not be Snohomish. How love you her?"

"Father, I have not loved women. I loved Lucie. I love her as a man might love his one and sacred wife. I cannot bear my life for pity of her — for fear of evil days coming fast upon her.

"Father, if after he married *her* he would have been true! He promised me; but he is bringing her down — down — down. Oh my God!"

Snohomish clinched the rail so fiercely the veins stood out knotted and purple on his hand. Father Marron was silent.

"He has robbed my life, and I consented, for the sake of his delicate mother whom the fact of his infamy would have killed, and because, since he could rob me thus, I could bear it! But I could not speak, think you! No, not though I stood misjudged forever!"

Snohomish threw his head back, his nostrils stinging, fierce with pride.

"He came here, bold in my sufferance, to hide under the protection of one whom he had wronged irrevocably! Father, I suffered it.

"He brought *her* here; he brought his happiness here before my eyes; she trusted him; he exulted over her innocent doom; when he could, he insulted me. He knew that now of all times I should not speak. Father, I suffered it.

"Since then, for her sake, I have tried to save him. He will not be saved; but shall he bring *her* down. Is it not enough that a strong man shall have suffered all his life, for him? Shall he bring her down to her ruin? Her—oh loving woman!—to heart-break, to agony, to suffering untold! I will not suffer it! Too late! oh, my God, it is done. Too late!"

"And is it so much then, to suffer? Snohomish," said the voice of the priest gently, as he had not spoken to the man before, and yet as if waking one from sleep.

"What if she suffer? What if she die in deepest wrong? What if thou diest wronged? Snohomish. It is a little thing."

"And a man's fame at the last! And a sweet woman's fame! Who knows what infamy he may forge—may breathe upon her name!"

"It is a little thing. You seem to think, oh Snohomish! that God is weak! that Truth is poor, and must go begging alms upon the street! I have not seen God so shaken! I have not seen Truth begging alms! Fear not, Snohomish. Only, if God hath given thee to suffer, and if He hath given thee—oh crowning gift!—to suffer "injustice" at His beloved hand, still keep thou meek!"

Snohomish gazed at the priest with troublous, arrested eyes.

"Snohomish, remember this: in all the world no fool was ever fooled. No innocent

person was ever wronged — no, nor can be! Keep thou still. God is not weak in heaven!"

"Is it wise then, oh Father," cried the man, struggling exceedingly bitterly, "that a man be fooled unto the end!"

"Snohomish, it is the 'wise'—dost thou not know how they themselves have written it in tears of blood and despair—whom life has beaten and fooled! Snohomish, dost thou not know how God forever has spoken: it is the fools of this world whom life has martyred and crowned."

"And *He* can suffer a wrong that wrings my human heart! Oh Father!"

"Aye, since His 'wrong' is love! His 'suffering' thou knowest not, for the softness of its wings! his heart-break is the entrance door of Life!

"Dost thou not know, Snohomish, how Christ, the God, walked in death. They bruised and mocked Him. He cried 'I am a King's Son! I have legions of defending angels!' Still He, the great One, walked in death. But when God permitted that they

crucify Him who had loved them, His heart was doubly riven. He moaned, 'Forsaken! forsaken!' and with *heart-break* the gates of Life opened to Him! He returned unto His own!"

Snohomish groped with his hand upon the rail, as if seeking, wondering blindly, his eyes still dim with an intolerable pain. But those distressed eyes softened. The priest stood, ugly, pitiful, unblessed, as though God, busy with the soul of the man, had left his stunted form and heavy drooping face untouched. Snohomish met the unconscious sublimity of his gaze, soul to soul.

"You too have suffered," he murmured; "and only God knows! You have had hope to see it crushed, ambition changed for hard endurance, have loved only to resign. You too have missed of life."

"Snohomish," said the priest, most gently, "what is life?"

"Oh Father," cried the man, his passionate eyes straining, the last pang of renunciation

whitening his lips, "thou knowest — what is life!"

"Aye, I know!" said the priest, while a smile of ineffable beauty lit up his piteous face, "through One who died!"

LUCIE, THE PRIDE OF
THE DORNES.

CHAPTER IX.

LUCIE, THE PRIDE OF THE DORNES.

"It's luck! luck! luck! it can't fail me!" cried Gordon, with flushed face. "It brought me you, Lucie. It brings me everything! It saves me every time. Don't you know there's a sort of superstition among 'gamblers' that a man is safe with it; that when luck once gets after him, it's as impossible to escape as doom is to the unfortunate."

"What has it brought us now?" said Lucie, listlessly.

"I put five dollars in a lottery a few weeks ago. Look here! little wife."

Gordon's glowing face was ingenuous, his

eyes sparkled tenderly. He had not taken a drop of wine ; he had been more than kind since they came to San Movaria. A sickening, unspeakable fear had been in Lucie Dorne's heart when he spoke of a new fortune. She looked at the check carefully. It seemed as ingenuous as the waiting smile upon Gordon's face.

Relief and a strong revulsion of feeling came over her. Had she then misjudged him in many things? The need, the longing to believe well of him was so great, it had become almost an insanity. If she could only wake up, as from a hideous dream, and find him pure and true, life with its deep alternations of poverty and danger would have no trial then.

"It's a plebeian way of making a bit, I know, Lucie," said Gordon, bending over her with his handsome, laughing face ; "but we don't mind, dearest ? since we were in such straits."

"Let us go to Lastchance, Gordon," Lucie pleaded, "we have enough here now. I have a right to my superstitions, too," she said, stroking his hair coaxingly as of old. "Take me

to Lastchance. I *have* a superstition — a longing to be there when I am ill."

"And so you shall, Sweet," said Gordon, "but not just now. I must double and treble this money before we go up north. I know how, and in an honorable undertaking. Lucie, life is all changed for me now forever. I have learned some things I can never forget, if you will only hold to me, and love me. Don't you think that you can trust me, dearest?"

But *because* they trusted him, he could not bear the woman's uplifted eyes. He thought of their scornful, mocking gleam as he had first seen her in her proud beauty at the play. Between that time and this, when she could raise them to him so, what lonely, travelled roads of suffering must have been! And yet, pride had grown with their pathos! as though the deeper he would have crushed her in his ruin, ever the more she had risen above him, scathless, free.

Gordon stifled the imprecation on his lips; he began to pace the room restlessly.

"You never loved me," he muttered; "it is

not so easy for a man to go right when he knows that he is not loved."

"Gordon!" cried Lucie, sharply; she staggered, pain moving her white lips.

"Oh, forgive me!" cried Gordon, running to her; "don't I know how you have loved me, borne with me. Don't I know how patient and true you have been! Oh, Lucie! But you treat me as a child. You do not respect me as a woman should her husband."

Lucie's smile was only sad as she put her hand in his hair, where he had knelt beside her: "I shall though, now? Gordon," she asked gently.

"There it is!" said Gordon petulantly; "always as a child." He would never meet her gaze long; he rose and continued pacing the room.

For successive nights after that he came home with even a hotter flush in his cheeks, eyes gleaming and unsteady.

Then he sank into a fever, and was at the gambling table, winning or losing, wildly reaching out his hand for the gains, or moaning that luck was against him, that the eyes of some

poor fool who jumped overboard once upon a time were always on him.

For the rest, he was cunning. Wandering back in other scenes, his eyes following Lucie, craving her incessantly, he yet hesitated at the brink of every disclosure; wandered where she knew, but went not beyond, his hollow wildly-startled gaze revealing only its own duplicity.

He raved if she left the room, left his bedside, was quiet if she was near him, and yet complained of her. "She was no true wife; true wives did not despise their husbands, they loved and honored them; he called upon the doctor, the women in the room, all, to witness she was no true wife."

But when she whispered him very gently, asking him where was their money, that she must have some for their needs, he lifted up his wasted hands to cling about her neck, and wept. "It was lost! lost!"

"And we have nothing? Gordon."

He shook his head, still clinging to her; the fever began to bound in his pulses again.

"You must not mind," said Lucie, laying him

back tenderly, the eyes that had been over lonely, travelled roads never faltering; "I have enough, quite enough, dear. Do not mind."

So presently the rings glittered no more on Lucie's fingers, and she had taken a solitary walk to the pawnbroker's at dusk. Her watch followed the rings, and then her rich cloak, and other garments, heavy parcels carried alone and wearily when she could steal away for a few moments after dark.

And Gordon trusted, knew she would provide somehow, let the matter drop from his troubled mind, but clung to her.

The doctor shook his head, spoke of a disturbed brain, some secret anxiety; the patient did not mend.

So Lucie schooled herself to laugh, to step always lightly in that room, to chase the shadows from the eyes that would speak of lonely, travelled roads, and bring back instead the beams of a light heart buried.

One evening Gordon called her to him. He had been studying his wasted hands.

"Lucie," he said, "I don't think God would

be hard on a poor fellow like me, do you? You know what a wild life I have led always, without good influences. I don't believe God, if He is a good God, will punish *any one* forever, do you?"

"I don't know," said Lucie; "I shouldn't care!"

"You shouldn't care," said Gordon, shocked. "I thought women, good women, were always thinking about those things. Lucie, I thought you would help me."

"I couldn't care," said Lucie. "Why, if I could find God and love Him," she cried, tears coming into her passionate, darkening eyes, "I shouldn't care whether He punished me or not."

"I'd be *glad* if He punished me. When we were children together, my brothers and sisters, — they used to say foolishly, as children do, my father was fondest of me. But he denied me the most. He gave me all the hard things, the undesirable things, was severe with me, never let me escape. But somehow, I never minded, never! *for I knew he loved me!*"

"Yes," said Gordon wearily; "but Lucie, suppose — suppose a man born with defects and then afterwards surrounded by bad influences often; suppose he had done some wrong things, it would not make him any better to punish him forever, would it?"

"I don't know, Gordon; I had not thought; I should not think it would be of any use."

"Love and kindness would be a great deal more likely to change him, don't you think?" said Gordon; "to make him feel sorry, and kind treatment is always more effective than cruelty, isn't it, Lucie?"

"I should think it would be just as well," said Lucie; "but Gordon! Gordon!" said she, passionately, "would you be willing to be the King's fool, pleading off from his rod and eating the fat thrown to you outside, if through any suffering you could enter in and be an heir!"

"Oh I would not mind the much or the less of 'suffering,' but I could not stand it not to have the name of the House! Though I starved, though I was called to go out and fight in its

wars, and die in its victory — but it would be with the name of the House, and with my place at my father's side!"

"Lucie," said Gordon, turning away feebly, "I want you to promise me something. Promise me if I should die you would never marry any other man. It would trouble me in my grave. Promise me."

Lucie with her absent glowing eyes seemed hardly to see him as he spoke. "I had not thought," she murmured; "oh yes, I promise."

Gordon lay back with a sigh, clutching at her firm hands and holding them.

He mended very slowly as the days went by. All the money Lucie had got had been spent; there was not enough to pay the rent of the rooms, not enough for the medicines needed. When he was able so that he could sit up a little and did not require her constant care, Lucie went out to look for work.

She entered some dressmaking establishments: they had nothing for her to do. Bright eyes rested curiously on her sweet, desperate face and unworn hands.

She knocked at the door of a lawyer's office :
 "Had he copying for her to do?" He was suave,
 garrulous.

"Our copying is all done by the type-writer, madam. But madam," he added in a succulent tone, as she was about to leave, "I always pity the distressed. Accept this, madam, as a token of my sympathy." He held a note toward her, his bleared eyes ogling her.

"You mistake," said Lucie quietly, her look too proud for wrath, it pierced him like fierce, tempered steel. But she trembled as she went down the stairs. It seemed as though her broken heart gushed to her lips. There was a woman writing in a little office opening out of the hall below.

"May I come in a moment?" said Lucie.

She sank into a chair, and the great gasping sobs came and shook her beyond her control; her tears were like a storm.

"I am sorry," said the woman, gravely; "is there nothing I can do to assist you?"

"Only to forgive me for troubling you," said Lucie, rising when the first grief was over, and

drying her eyes. She thanked the woman and went out.

She wandered to many houses, knocked at the kitchen doors. She "could do any work; would work all day and only needed to go home to care for her husband, who was ill, at night. I am strong," she pleaded; and though she was pale with watching she had not yet lost her splendid physical strength. Her dress was plain but elegantly fine; she had no other; her voice was as soft and sweet among the harsh tones of the women of whom she sued for work as though she had come from a strange country.

They regarded her most curiously; they were sorry they had nothing for her to do.

Lucie wandered back in the streets, the eyes that had been over lonely, travelled roads very haggard to-night. As she was turning a corner with weariest steps, something familiar under the white canopy of a grocery wagon coming rapidly down the street arrested her gaze.

The person was not yet conscious of her presence. He was driving recklessly, sitting on the extreme edge of the wagon seat. His posi-

tion in mercantile circles was evidently a boyish and inferior one ; he was simply delivering groceries. He wore, though it had not rained for many weeks in that bright clime, a tattered waterproof coat ; it was buttoned tight about him, as suggesting the possibility that he had no other coat under it ; his hat was pushed far and fearlessly back from his forehead. It was Colonel Bloomer.

TOWARDS LASTCHANCE.

CHAPTER X.

TOWARDS LASTCHANCE.

"THE reason why we came to be here in California is how, thus, and why-fore," said the Colonel pompously, as he sat in the Ferris's parlor that evening. He still wore the rubber coat buttoned tightly, but now with a becoming complement of collar and cuffs. "In all our travellins, wheresoever we have travelled, we have never failed to go home through 'Frisco; have we, Blandoline?"

"I should hope not, Magnus," said Mrs. Bloomer.

"So we rustled our way along to 'Frisco; there we sent the girls home. We drifted down

here to Southern California in an enterprise that I had great hopes of — but it busted! it busted!

“But now, my friends, to Lastchance we must and we will git. It’s necessary for Mrs. Ferris’s sake; the change’ll set Lysander up; and as for Blandoline and me, we’ve been hankerin’ for it. I don’t know when,” said the Colonel, with sudden great impressiveness, “I’ve heered the old Falls so strong, as I have of late, a-callin’ ‘Return, ye busted! Welcome, welcome home! ye busted ones.’”

“Me heart’s jest breakin’ for old Lastchance, sure,” said Mrs. Bloomer; “never fear, Lucie darlin,’ but we’ll get there.”

The Colonel was meditatively jingling some loud-sounding substances in his pocket.

“It ain’t coin,” said Mrs. Bloomer parenthetically, “but Magnus always will have something to jingle in his pocket just the same, if it’s only a corkscrew and a glass stopple, and a bit of a tin box cover.”

“True, Bandoline, true,” said the Colonel, producing those articles even as she spoke and

contemplating them gravely in his hand ; "but a man must have an appearance of credit."

"Not a very full hand, Lysander," said the Colonel. "A corkscrew and a glass stopple won't take us over many miles in Pullman palace cars; a tin box cover ain't a goin' to give us the *ong-tray* to many first-class hotels. No, it ain't a flush hand exactly.

"But if we stay here, we shan't never git no further. I've been a workin' here like a dog for a bone, and glad to git that. The fact is, the Californy of the early days is no more ; it's become *effete*. There's a element crept in that I don't know how to grapple with. It's a Eastern element, and it's a-pourin' in continuoal, like h—l all afire. The old campaigners gets pushed out every time. No, Lysander, business ain't conducted as it used to be."

"Well, Magnus, how are you going to get us home?" said Mrs. Bloomer, impatiently.

"I'm a-comin' to it, Blandoline ; I'm a-comin' to it. We shall have to do some supernateral tall rustlin' ! But I calkerlate, under the circumstances, everybody here is disposed to rustle,

ef they can only git up to Lastchance! We shall have to make a feeble beginnin'. Yes, my friends, considerin' the distance we've got to go over, we shall have to make a weak and consumptive beginnin', but it will *be* a beginnin', and we shall be on the road. My employers, Harvey & Co., has got a pair of mules that has become so fractious there can't nobody handle 'em but me. I can deliver more groceries in two hours with them mules than all the other teams the company's got can carry around in a day! But yet they speak of sellin' em! givin' 'em away—anythin'! Jest because some women has been up to the store complainin' that their eggs was delivered smashed, and that their butter and cheese and vanilla extract was all mixed up together—humph!

"They're valluable mules!"

There was a thoughtful silence in the room.

"Valluable to me," continued the Colonel, "but of no use to the company without me. The wagon I've been usin' is a triflin' wreck, and I've heered 'em say they was goin' to throw it by and git a new one. So, as they're owin'

me a month's pay, ef I should take the wagon and the mules, and not trouble them about the wages, I reckon it 'ud be an exchange without a difference."

The thoughtful silence continued.

"Shall you say anything to *them* about it, Magnus?" said Mrs. Bloomer, with incorruptible innocence.

"I shall conduct the business on principle, Blandoline, strictly on principle, and in the interests of humanity. And I want you all to sleep through to-morrow, and be ready at half-past eleven to-morrow evenin', sharp."

There was no night at that season in that fair country. When the sun went down, high and glorious rode the moon. It rode above four happy hearts — widely differing, and yet to each of whom, in some strange way, the adventure was as the breath of life — as they embarked in the ghostly grocery wagon.

The Colonel knew the roads across country, through the cañons, had travelled them years before. He was radiant, even in the white moonlight; had turned up the collar of the

thin rubber coat, coughing, for there was a deep chill in the air.

"On the road! on the road at last!" he cried, snapping his whip, the mules clamoring over the stony pass like mad. Gordon seemed to have sprung miraculously into health with the keen mountain air and strange escape. The mules, it was plain, were better fitted for their present enterprise than for the delivering intact of small groceries.

"Are they running away, Magnus?" inquired Mrs. Bloomer, calmly.

"Not especially, Blandoline," replied the Colonel; "no faster than we want to go, my love."

The Colonel was strangely tender to his Blandoline, thoughtful for them all, wrapped the blankets around them closer, lest they should be chilled in the night air. For himself, shivering in his rubber coat, he protested that he was very warm, gave breath to a heated sigh, and loosened a little the collar about his throat, to prove it.

From the wreck of former luminous adorn-

ments, Mrs. Bloomer had preserved one ornament—only one. It was an oval, gold-framed portrait of the Colonel, which she wore as a breast-pin, above her brave and ample bosom. As the moonlight glanced upon it, its lustre seemed to fill the rattling grocery wagon.

Lucie, wearied, had the mules' bag of oats for a pillow. Flying past shelving rock and gloomy chasm and sounding stream, she fell into a fitful sleep, at last, and dreamed. And now, still flying over the wild places, it was not poor Colonel Bloomer any more who was driving them in his thin, tattered, waterproof coat, but a great angel, or a cloud, bearing them swiftly, without jar; and yet, the misty being had somehow the similitude of Colonel Bloomer's face; and yet, it was not that, but something beautiful and heroic.

At Richelieu Pass, far above San Hesel, where they arrived about ten in the morning, they made a breakfast of biscuits and coffee from stores brought by the provident Colonel, fed the mules, and stretched themselves on

their blankets in the sun, that warmed and nourished them like a mother, so that they fell adozing as listlessly as orchids on the hillside.

With evening they set out again. Their provisions had been stolen while they slept by some wandering trapper or Indian. But the mules, freshened with the oats and rest, did brave work that night. By the next morning they had got so far as the great health resort of the Columbine Hills at Luzoy ; and they had nearly lost their humanity with hunger. The Colonel tethered his weary and famishing mules in the grass, and led his family towards the hotel, cheerfully jingling the cork-screw, the glass stopple, and the tin-box cover in his pocket.

Those who were so fortunate as to be guests at the Columbines at that time never forgot a charming individual in a tourist's rubber coat, "much worn," who sat for a day on the hotel piazza in the gracious sunshine, and — except at meal times — entertained them with personal reminiscences of wealth and adventure, of successes and reverses, beside which the pen

of fiction were tame, jingling meanwhile, inoffensively, the still suggestive resources of wealth in his pocket.

But early, very early in the succeeding dawn, an old guest of the house, who had been sleepless, heard the soft whirring of a rope outside his window.

It was the Colonel, lowering his Blandoline from the third-story window. Another lovely female followed in like manner — Lucie. Then an athletic man. Then a stentorian whisper ascended from below: "Magnus! Magnus! be after bringin' me brooch that I left on the table, darlin', with your own phees'ogonomy on it."

At this the guest opened his shutters and looked out, distinctly revealing his features. He seemed to be a humorous individual, irritable, and yet chastened by illness. He gazed down on the group, and grinned frankly: "Is there anything else you have forgotten?" he murmured. "If there is, allow me to get it, and save you the trouble of coming up!"

The Colonel, who had now safely descended, replied with a voiceless wave of the hand.

"Good-bye, then," said the guest, politely referring his gaze to the moon, "and God bless you!"

The mules were harnessed again, and sped diligently on their way. By noon the travellers were many miles from the Columbines, and very hungry and faint again.

Passing slowly through the little hamlet of Marionville, with its solitary homes on the outskirts, the homeless wanderers saw a housewife carrying out some apple-pies, to place on a bench to cool. After deliberation, it was decided that the Colonel should graciously ask the woman to give them one of her pies.

He was seen in conversation with her, but returned to them with an anguished and humiliated face.

"She won't give one; she won't even lend one," he said.

"Go and *take* one, Magnus!" said Mrs. Bloomer, with firm indignation.

Which the Colonel, thus inspired, boldly did, — the woman falsely screaming "Murder!" and the mules hammering on at a sharp pace.

So they reached Black Cañon, and there encamped for another night. But, with the morning,—mules jaded and unfed, provisions gone, and they tired, woeful, famished,—it was evident that this way of the journey must soon end somehow.

“We could stand it awhile longer, Magnus,” said Mrs. Bloomer, aside; “but there’s some of us,” she continued significantly, “who can’t. It’s jest this, indade, that it’s got to be a matter of life or death with some of us, Magnus, me dear.”

“True, Blandoline, true,” said the Colonel, thoughtfully. “But we shall get to Townesboro’ to-day. I will sell the mules. We shall manage,—we shall manage.”

LASTCHANCE GAINED.

CHAPTER XI.

LASTCHANCE GAINED.

AT Townesboro' the Colonel lost no time in disposing of the mules and wagon, obtaining enough for the night's lodging and an insignificant bit of railway travel on the great distance that still lay for them beyond.

But meanwhile the thoughtful Colonel had purchased an accident insurance policy.

"I don't anticipate as anything'll happen to me, Blandoline," said he; "but if it does, I mean to be prepared to meet it."

He won all hearts on the train by the splendor of his magnetic good-nature and harmless grandiloquence, was universally helpful and

obliging, and naturally hand-in-glove with the officials, whom, in their intervals of leisure, he entertained with anecdotes that made the burden of the way grow light to them.

Particularly he — who had had no dinner — stood on the platform that attached to the dining-room car, handing the women and children across ; a graceful act of chivalry, for the wind was blowing a sandy gale and the train running with great speed. And so, when the brave, courtly-looking gentleman in the sad rubber coat staggered, hatless, an instant in the fierce wind, stretching up his hand as if to see, and fell from the train, there was universal horror and commiseration.

The train was already steaming into Grenoble. Poor Mrs. Bloomer with the Ferrises got off there, waiting how now the Colonel must soon be brought to them.

Mrs. Bloomer was pathetically still, making ready a room for him in the dingy railway hotel. Then she heard the expected, ominous sounds on the stairs and clung to Lucie ; but a cheerful voice preceded those doleful sounds.

"Blandoline! Blandoline!"

With a glad cry Blandoline sprang to the door, and her Magnus was brought in, pale but beaming.

"After all," said he, when the family were alone together, "it wasn't such an unfort'nit incident, maybe, was it? We shall git a little rest here, and when that right leg of mine gits patched up a little, means has been given us for goin' on again."

The Colonel, who suffered no pain, was garrulous and grateful; seemed particularly anxious to be entertaining and to do all the talking.

"That was a hard wind, though, and dusty. I'd felt a little faint; I'd ought not to stood out there so long. But after all, maybe it wasn't sich an unfort'nit incident."

"Magnus," said Mrs. Bloomer, very solemnly, "did you do it on purpose?"

Magnus never answered that question.

But his symptoms were all good for recovery, and no one, not even the surgeon, anticipated any difficulty as to that. Only on the following day the Colonel got unexpectedly very restless of

the delay ; could bear it no longer ; would be "on the road."

Pains began to plague him, only now presently he felt them, not as pains, but as the travails of a wild journey. For as those darting pangs increased his head quite left him ; or rather it was he who had already left the bruised tenement of the flesh and was "on the road" again, travelling tumultuously through the night.

Seeing which, poor Mrs. Bloomer never hoped again, but wailed heart-brokenly.

"It's the death angel as is bearin' him away. It's the white horses as has come for my poor Magnus now. Speak to me, Magnus, me own boy ; give the death-kiss to your own Blandoline, till soon I be lavin' this sad world too. Sure we need not mourn the lavin' of it, Magnus — to be with God forever."

Thus poor Blandoline, continually making the sign of the cross above her love.

The Colonel did not mourn — hardly understood about the kiss — being dragged so swift and troublously through the night by those

white horses. For dying so in his strength it took at times three men to hold him.

Mrs. Bloomer sent for the priest. "Oh, and it's not Father Marron as can come to ease his pains, so as he did for my poor little Jamie when he died; and never minded the death-road no more nor if he went beyent the door to play. Magnus! Magnus, darlin', you're goin' to Jamie!"

"He will not make confession now," said the priest sadly.

"Sure he nades it not — my Magnus. God forgive him, but I think it was in his heart to die for us, if nade be — my poor Magnus! Sure it's the blessed Christ anyway as 'll know that he minded always more for others than himself. Magnus, say goodbye till I be with you! Give the death-kiss to your poor Blandoline."

Aye, when he got near his journey's end — that journey of sharp rock and hidden precipice, of pain and weariness and toil.

He fell back gasping. Blandoline stooped over him, took his hands; he knew her, smiled, but knew not the strange place he was in.

“Hark!” he said, feebly lifting his hand.

For he heard the falls at Lastchance! rushing down, vast waves of healing after pain; and smiled, still listening with great, awe-struck eyes.

“Hark! don’t — you — hear — ’em, — Love?
‘Return ye — welcome — welcome ——.’”

Welcome! Welcome home, ye broken ones!

A PRINCE OF THE HOUSE.

CHAPTER XII.

A PRINCE OF THE HOUSE.

“POOTIES’ little beggar I ever see! pooties’ little blame head on him!” Thus Bill Stiles, in toothless admiration, — Bill Stiles, seemingly peaceablest of men, though visibly rent and scarred by many bullet holes.

The subject of this encomium, a delicious infant in arms, looked up at Bill and smiled.

“D——n me!” said the enraptured Bill, his grin now almost embracing his one mutilated ear; “pooties’ little blame beggar I ever see!”

For the infant king and ruler of Lastchance, so constituted by the sovereign will of the people, was kind to all his subjects, but kindest to

the unfortunate, as, coming so late from God, "I reckon he caught on to a thing or two up thar'," intimated the much-scarred Bill sententially.

The king had his proud mother's face, her pure curved throat; was fretful, sweet—had been through such weary travels before his birth—smiled wistfully through tears, the little under lip quivering, then as he met the adoring gaze of his subjects from above, the lip ceased to quiver, the smile became fit for the royal visage, all love and sweetness and heavenly condescension.

It was to win one of those smiles that "Bill" would stump painfully about, dancing the king in his arms, and then when the effulgence came would lose all facial self-possession, as we have seen, in rapt and wondering admiration, to the great amusement of the bystanders, who in their turn, however, uncomplainingly approached to be scandalized by their all-potent sovereign.

And he had many nurses, as befitting royalty, Mrs. Bloomer, who held him upon her broad and healthful bosom at night, sometimes inquiring

stealthily, "And what word did my own Magnus send down by yez when ye came, ye swatest cherubin and seraphin!"

To which also the infant, replying now and then with that rare smile, the widowed Blandoline would clasp him to her breast and kiss him rapturously as if quite understanding such silent, heavenly language, and strangely satisfied.

He was tenderly tossed and danced even by poor Chin Ling, the despised Celestial cook, who, safe under the guardianship of His baby Majesty, took his turn to be ruthless and defiant, putting on bold Christian behavior for the time, and declaring fearlessly to his tormentors, "You go helle! go helle alle same!"

Faithfullest among them all poor old Grayface, looking up with joy in his blind, prescient gaze when that imperial baby hand caressed him. Grayface's blind surveillance over the baby king pleased Lucie, but distressed her too.

"He doesn't watch him because anything could happen to *him*, Gordon?"

"Oh, of course nothing could happen to *him*!" said Gordon not unpleasantly, for he

adored his beautiful child too, and yet with just the slightest suspicion of a sneer in his tone. "We might, all the rest of us, be drowned in the Dead Sea, and you wouldn't care, if nothing happened to *him*."

Lucie, who would never be physically very strong again, had recovered with the gift of her boy all her old mental gayety. She turned a laughing face to Gordon as if reproving him for his foolishness. The king mocked her bright glance with his own pensive, ineffable smile. Lucie pressed him to her lips.

"Love you!" she cried to her child; "I never dreamed what love was until I had you! Didn't I carry you over weary, weary roads, my Life, and it was only deep, deep joy for love of you! Didn't I die a very death in your life, and it was nothing, nothing, nothing, for love of you! And no pain or loss could be anything for evermore, for the love I bear you! And, so I have you, I do not know what they mean, who say it is happier in heaven! And so you should go from me, my Heart! my

Heart! I could only follow you! Mind that; mamma could only follow you!"

"Come into the Pagoda," said Gordon to Snohomish, who had appeared in the doorway; "Lucie is just doing a bit of idol worship!"

Lucie flushed, the fierce mother yearning in her eyes dying into a smile of welcome as she raised them to Snohomish. "Never mind," said she, hiding her lovely embarrassment in her child, "*they* don't know what falling in love is; do they, my sweet?"

Gordon's lip curled slightly, but Snohomish turned suddenly pale; he did not look at Lucie as he advanced. The baby crowed and leaped at sight of him, for of all his faithful henchmen this big, tireless mountaineer was the pet.

Snohomish walked gigantically, as though the world were very large and with room to be quite upright in it. The ceiling was so low, and the king so dainty. Lucie could not help smiling at his vastness. His coarse blue coat, beside, bore frank and unassuaged evidence to the ravages of many log-rollings, the money set

aside for a new coat having been dedicated as usual to another cause, if Lastchance only knew.

Lucie wondered, and pitied "poor old Snohomish," as Dalliance Bloomer called him, so poor and grand and childless,—ah, that was it. In her inmost breast Lucie had a speechless pity for every one who was not the mother of the king!

Gordon, through whatever adversity, was always neat and fine. "Gordon, you are too slick!" said Lucie with assumed disapproval, gayly. "You may just go down to Gulch City, as you had got ready to do. I'm going to mend Snohomish. Give me that coat, Mount Saint Snohomish, if you please. I'm going to mend it while you hold baby."

Gordon, restless to be free for his daily excursion to the little town below, kissed his wife and went away.

Snohomish watched with a sort of awe Lucie's deft white fingers flying over that hitherto unsanctified garment of his.

"Doesn't he grow! Snohomish," said Lucie, nodding brightly to the king.

"Grow!" said Snohomish; "he just *jumps* along!" making as if the child were growing right heavy on his arm. "Poor old Snohomish!" so delighted in her joy!

"You wouldn't dream how many ambitions I used to have," said Lucie, the o'd sparkle—ripple—in her voice, "and how that little man has satisfied them all!" She laughed. "Do you know, I have felt lately like asking everyone, 'Are you hungry? are you cold?' I have so much myself, it seems as though others must lack. The words keep coming to my heart at least, 'Are you hungry? are you cold?'"

Tears now in the beautiful, laughing eyes. Snohomish looked at her in that miserable room, a woman born and bred of all elegancies, graceful in her tawdry print gown, reduced at last to that established pattern of Lastchance; the white fingers shorn of their rings. He guessed that story, knew so much of what she had borne, of what, alas! she must bear. And there were the eyes he loved, fixed on him in their divine, large pity.

Even a strong man then might have burst out with "God knows how *hungry* I am! hungry to tell you of my pity and love! my poor, injured Love! hungriest of all to save you from pain and peril."

Not so Mount Saint Snohomish, mountain of Truth. There were sacred laws in his slow mind, that man or woman should sooner die than break. She was the wife of another man; she was the mother of the king. So he only played with the child, pale and stupidly.

Lucie thought, with the greater pity, how this strange Snohomish, who had a bright mind, as Father Marron said, had grown dull from long isolation and the bearing of his strange, heavy trial.

It was in her impulsive heart to win his story from him. Why did he have only that one heathenish name, that any one could see was not his name at all? What was his own name? How brave she thought him; but was it right to suffer always, being innocent? Did Father Marron and he think a man had no duty towards himself? Still, it was brave,—the

bravest she ever knew ; she wondered ! etc., etc.

Lastchance wondered ; but somehow, in spite of his benign gentleness, Lastchance never asked Snohomish questions.

Somehow, after all, the features of the man invited confession, and not pity.

So Lucie's thought turned involuntarily. "Snohomish," she said, thoughtfully, "they all go to you with their troubles. I want to burden you with a little trouble of mine. May I?"

"Tell mamma it could not be a burden or a trouble, either," said Snohomish instantly, tossing the restless king.

"You know when I married Gordon," Lucie went on, with downcast eyes, "I did it without the consent or knowledge of my family. Gordon and I 'ran away,' in fact."

"Yes."

"And after that there were many circumstances that led me not to renew any intercourse with my family. Until baby came, and after that long illness, I knew that I might live

and get well again ; and baby was so beautiful, and so like them ; you don't know how like them he is. I notice it in everything. I had been too proud to write before, though I died. But now I did not mind, for baby's sake. I wrote them a long letter. You don't know how it seemed, writing that letter after so long, Snohomish."

Proud Lucie ! The tears came easily now. There was a little sob and moan in her throat, like the king's.

"I know," said Snohomish very gently.

"I told them how good and kind Gordon is. He is ! I told them of the happiness of my life. I told them, most of all, of baby. He is worthy of them ; he is the handsomest, noblest little Dorne that ever lived."

Snohomish nodded, his eyes fixed on the lovely king.

"Well, my mother had not been strong ; they had gone abroad. I wrote when baby was six months old. It was a month before I could hear from them. They wrote, — oh Snohomish, you don't know what it was to get that

letter! They wrote me, after all, with such — such *heavenly* kindness. They were just about to sail then; and they said that immediately on their return home they should write, and send baby his long-deferred gifts. They seemed to suspect,” said Lucie, blushing, “that our circumstances were not the very best. I did not mind, — for baby’s sake. And now this is my trouble; or, rather, our trouble — Gordon’s and mine. We know that they must have got home weeks since. I know that they wrote me, Snohomish. I *know* it. I know that they sent the baby gifts of money. But Gordon has been down to Gulch City every day for the mail, and we have received nothing. Sometimes, when he has come home day after day with nothing, I have cried so over the disappointment, — I am more childish than I used to be, — I think I have wearied him. We suspect some treachery, but we don’t know whom to suspect. Oh, Snohomish! who could rob *him*?”

The frail fingers shook; a flush of weakness came into her cheeks.

“Who could rob *him*? my little one, Snoho-

mish," she repeated, with feverishly burning eyes.

"Nay, you must not think that," said Snohomish, very quietly and firmly. "You must not think it. There is some mistake. I will do all I can to help you, Lucie."

IN THE DARK WOOD.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE DARK WOOD.

GORDON came home late — came, singing, up the trail, a little flushed with wine if one had seen in the darkness. He had a sweet voice, and was sending it before him lightly with some song of love and wine.

Snohomish had been walking with long strides, in the wood at the turn of the trail, shivering impatiently, waiting for him.

So Gordon found him suddenly in his path, and dropped his song with a gesture of dogged, long-suffering disgust.

"Well," said he, "what now! A man might as well die as lead such a dog's life as this."

"Better die, a thousand times, I should say," said Snohomish. "There's no comparison between dying and living like a dog, Brent. God pity you! Even poor old Grayface has intelligence enough to be true. But you!"

Gordon changed his attitude considerably. He fancied, if the moon should come out from behind the clouds, it would show the meek Snohomish changed into a flaming lion. He had had examples of that sort in private.

"Oh well, out with it, John," said he wearily. "What now? Kill me, if you want to. I'm bad enough, I know. It would probably break Lucie's heart, but other people are not supposed to care so much about that as I do."

The flaming lion gritted his teeth and clenched his strong hands in the darkness.

"Kill you! man," said he; "do you think I could *touch* you? Oh, you poor fool—fool of all fools! trampling under your swine's feet the pearls God, as if in divine sarcasm, showers upon you! Stealing, yes, *stealing* from your wife and child; throwing it away to other

swine at the gaming table and — you only know where. And coming home, steeped in wine, to *lie* to that angel — before the face of your innocent babe ! ”

Gordon trembled, and yet with an air of unspeakable relief, as though worse things might have been.

“ Oh pshaw ! John,” said he ; “ is *that* what you’ve been troubling your head about ? A man has a right to take what belongs to his wife and child.”

“ A man has a right to steal from his wife and child ? ” roared Snohomish, with a leonine sneer. “ Yes, because no *man* ever did it, no, nor to all God’s eternity ever will ! ”

Gordon’s face was utterly malignant in the dark ; he yawned, audibly. “ Oh well,” said he, “ I’m not up to heroics to-night. It seems to be pretty much my business after all. I confess I’m sleepy. Suppose we go home.”

“ Presently you shall go home. What is the amount of money you have taken ? Tell me exactly, for I shall find out within a few hours.”

Gordon muttered a desperate oath. “ Is this

thing all to be gone over? I'll give up sleep, and we'll have 'scenes,' morning, noon, and night. I've had a sick wife in tears to keep things cheerful at home, and it seems I'm not to find any peace, even on the highway."

"What is the amount?" The lion ground his white teeth.

"So," almost whined Gordon; "after all your pretended consideration for women, you're going to break my wife's heart, are you? You're going to ferret this thing out, and go to her with the whole story? You know what the doctor said, that her life hung tremblingly, even yet. You know that she believes I'm going all right now; and that the whole thing will *kill* her. And yet you —"

"What is the amount?" roared the lion. "Leave the rest to me. Should I consult with you, think you, on a question of mercy! What is the amount?"

"Only a few hundred dollars," said Gordon doggedly.

"From the baby's grandparents how much?"

"About a hundred dollars, I believe."

"You lie. What is the amount? I shall know in a few hours."

"Oh well, say five hundred dollars, then."

"From Lucie's brother how much?"

"I thought only women had such an infernal curiosity."

"The amount?"

"Oh well, say it was the same."

"From her sister how much?"

"About the same, possibly." Gordon yawned again.

"And the letters from those of her own blood that you confiscated and kept from her in consequence, when she might have been dying, — was there anything of vital importance to her in those?"

"No. Only a lot of soft talk, and fol-de-rol about her condition. She is better off without them."

Gordon detected signs of the lion getting dangerous again. He determined to be more discreet in his next answer.

"How did they take it," demanded Snohomish, "her not writing any acknowledgment of the gifts?"

"They naturally concluded she was a little indisposed."

"You lie. They are deeply distressed. Her mother is ill again. Is she ill?"

"No."

"Is she ill?"

"Well, yes, if you insist on it."

"You have lately obtained more money by telegraphing to them bad news of Lucie's condition?"

Gordon uttered a fierce oath. "Why do you ask, then? How in h—l do you know?"

"You are like the philosopher's fish. Given one bone, a man can construct the whole of you," said the flaming lion. "You telegraphed alarmingly of Lucie's condition?"

"I dare say I might have done so."

"They sent more money?"

"I dare say."

"How much?"

"How can I presume to say anything about

my own affairs? A thousand dollars, possibly. You know best."

"I shall know. And have you any of this left?"

"Not a penny," said Gordon, with a reckless laugh. "You will believe *that*, at least."

"Very well. You can go home to your sleep now, Brent. I am going down to Gulch City to telegraph comfortingly to Lucie's mother. Lucie would get well fast enough in her happiness now were she wedded to any other than a brute.

"For the rest, my own mother gave me on her dying bed some jewels that she had always worn, and that I have kept, in the wreck of everything. They are of value, I believe, to make good this theft of yours from your wife and babe. The gifts of money must be brought to Lucie, as if only delayed. My mother, in heaven, would wish this, I believe. Correspondence between Lucie and her family must be re-established at once. I shall leave injunctions at the post-office that no letters are to be deliv-

ered to you. I demand that you spend your time up here, and go to work in the camp."

Gordon could hardly believe his ears. Was this all! Luck! luck! luck! in one way or another. He could not escape it.

"And you are not going to bruit the matter to Lucie, nor her family, John?" said he with involuntary relief and gayety of tone.

The lion swallowed hard with contempt.

"Man," said he, with a broken voice, coming forward and laying his hand on Gordon's shoulder, "I said I could not touch you — God forgive me. For her pure sake I could beg of you, spare her! spare her! spare her! It is all black behind you, Brent, but be true once before you die, and God will mark that in the end. That woman's love and forgiveness were infinite, so you were true to her. I could give my heart's blood to help you. Oh man, I swear to you it is the eternal truth, and not 'priest's talk' only, that poverty is nothing, nor suffering, nor disgrace, nor a lost life, nor the valley of the shadow of death; they are nothing, and weigh as nothing, *so a man be true*. Catch that hard

crown yet, you, from between the dark past and the sorrowful future, and live, man, though you perish — *live!* ”

Gordon listened, but he had unconsciously taken out a cigar. “I’ve made a sad mess of it, I know, John,” said he, in a respectful tone, lighting his cigar; “and I’m dead tired myself of this way of living. It’s dissipating, and it takes a man’s strength. I haven’t half the nerve I used to have. Of course I can’t promise to be a saint all at once”—puff! puff! —“but I’m going to take a turn right-about-face; you can depend on that.”

The lion’s pleading hand fell slack at his side. He strode on, down the cañon.

Gordon stood a moment looking after him, puffing his cigar.

“D—n this living on the stage!” said he. “Now I shall go home, and it will be: ‘Any letters, Gordon? Why are you so late?’ Tears. Scene Second. With what to come afterwards the Lord only knows!”

Then a new thought seemed to strike him. “How did John know about this affair?

Through Lucie, of course. So it has been mutual confidence and the rest, has it? Lovely tears and leonine protection and who knows what!" Gordon threw his cigar down with a terrible oath. This man of wine and many loves was blind at the thought of suspicion of this woman whom alone he loved, and who had never been his!

"Ah, I see," said he; "sending me off so d—d pleasantly this morning; and Snohomish with his 'For her sake!' and 'For her pure sake!' Cursed hypocrites! A man is a man, and may do what he will, but if I found there was any playing loose in that quarter, I'd shoot her dead before me, and d—n the consequences!"

THE PREY.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PREY.

LUCIE was asleep when Gordon entered their poor little home. Her pure face mocked his hateful thought ; he had no dream but of her perfect innocence, yet strangely to-night the evil within him grew at sight of her loveliness. If by imputation he could bring her nearer his own blackness at last,—she who had never been his ! He moved about the room noisily as if with intent to waken her.

“Did my letter come to-night ? Gordon,” she asked, looking up hopefully, with a glad smile of welcome ; “I have been so frightened all the evening without you, though I went to sleep at last.”

"No, the letters have not come," said Gordon. "When they do come, as they will very soon probably, you will be sorry for these continual suspicions of me, I hope."

"Why, I have had no suspicions of *you*, Gordon," said Lucie, wonderingly. "And have you got the position you were expecting at Gulch City, dear?" she asked with bright eagerness.

"No, you and Snohomish won't be able to manage that. I have decided it will be wise for me to stay at home and overlook my own family. I thought with one child in your arms and another to be born some months off, you were safe to be trusted, you and your 'saint' Snohomish —"

"Gordon, are you crazy? are you drunk?" Lucie sat upright in the bed with strange, dilated eyes.

"You may judge of that for yourself. Did I appear so when I came in? I have just come from an interview with your saint. He intimates that you have been reposing considerable confidence in him lately. You are evidently a novice at that sort of thing, Lucie,

and so I will inform you that your saint Snohomish is not a safe —”

Lucie, drawing her breath quick and hard, as if mortally stricken, rose from the bed and stood in the room, in her long white dress and flowing hair. Her eyes seemed to burn out her body's strength. She tottered feebly, but stood.

“I wish that he were here,” she cried. “I wish that he were here to give you the lie, and strike you dead! Gordon Ferris.”

“Oh, ho!” said Gordon, madly reckless now; “it has got as far as that, has it? Do you wonder I concluded it was time to be at home looking after my wife's reputation?”

Lucie, with her hand pressed to her breast as if a wound streamed there, spoke slowly, with effort, as though the blood gushed at intervals from between her pallid lips.

“I believe it all now,” she said, “all the dark things, thrust into my heart, that I would not, would not, let live, for love and hope of you, and for the sake of my child! Oh God! I believe it all now: that you would rob my child

and me; that you knew more than should be about poor Captain Williams's death; that Snohomish is indeed your brother, whom you robbed of what was more to him than life. 'Saint?' what else? And *you*!"

She sank with her face against the wall, her arms uplifted, clinging.

Gordon rushed forward. He would have struck her, only, with the devil's own leer on his face, he thought of a less merciful way.

"Yes, and *you*?" he said. "Is there more than one name that a man can give to you? Conniving at my absence to carry on your base amours with a fine hypocrite like yourself! Do you imagine I will have my innocent child cradled in such scenes? Understand that I have already taken measures to make out papers of your lunacy, if necessary, and that very soon the child will be mine, and mine only!"

Lucie, with the blood spent now from that wound, lifted the eyes of one who has died, to Heaven.

"God," she cried, "hear this man! hear Thou, and judge him!"

Fear not! oh woman. Such prayers God hears terribly.

RELEASE.

CHAPTER XV.

RELEASE.

GORDON, muttering to himself that the woman "would soon come to her senses, and be the better for learning who was her master ; he would take back the worst of it, and make up with her to-morrow, she being properly subdued," sank onto the bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

Lucie, where she had fallen by the wall, lay long lifeless. When she woke, it was only with a perplexed sense of the utter strangeness of the room. The lamp had been left burning dimly on the table. Gordon was breathing heavily.

"Why am I here?" said the woman, rising tall; all trouble, but this present one of the dim strangeness of the place, gone from her face. Indeed, she seemed stronger; there was a sweet flush in either cheek; her eyes were wildly bright, soft, and tender.

"Why am I here?" she whispered softly. "I can escape. Hush! I dreamed of a little white cross on the green hillside, and the sky was just above, with music in it. God! what music! that I could not reach! But I will go find my child."

She dressed noiselessly, her face glad to see in its bright anticipation and freedom from all care now, save that little one of the strangeness of the place.

"Hush!" she whispered again, timidly opening the door into the cold dawn, and creeping out with soft stealth.

Grayface was waiting for her! Lucie fondled him. "I think it is Eternity, Grayface," she said, watching the first far streak of the dawn. "There are ever so many waiting for Eternity, Grayface: Snohomish, and *you*, and a great many. So aren't you glad? See!"

Grayface lifted his blind eyes obediently to her hand.

"Oh, I forgot!" she cried, throwing her arms piteously around his neck; "but it isn't far off now; it's only just a little way now—a little way, poor old Grayface. Come! We must go find the sky above the little white cross. Come! Do you know the way too, Grayface?"

Aye, Grayface knew, and faithfully followed her.

Gordon woke with a cooler brain and a vivid recollection of the events of the preceding night. Not finding Lucie beside him, he concluded at once that she had risen early as she usually did, and gone in to Mrs. Bloomer, who slept with their child. So he took a light nap before rising, and then went to Mrs. Bloomer at the next door.

Mrs. Bloomer had not seen Lucie; had feared she was ill; was just dressing baby to bring him over.

Gordon turned suddenly pale, and began to speak rapidly. Was it possible? He had had fear about Lucie's mind of late. She must

have risen from his side in the night, and wandered away !

Grayface was not to be found, nor Snohomish.

Then a dark design flashed into that man's mind. Evil insatiable. But what matter? "A man must save himself."

Snohomish, who had tramped that weary way through the cañon, in an attempt to redeem some of his — Gordon's — misdoings, would be returning early in the morning. Lucie, whom he had driven insane, would wander down that one outlet from Lastchance, too. A nice picture they would present, returning, for a husband's woes !

And yet, if Lucie were lost, or should be found lying dead with peace on her sweet face at last ! Gordon seemed to see her, and shivered. Daliance Bloomer had already flung herself astride her horse, and was galloping recklessly down the cañon. They saw her meet Snohomish, struggling upward with his burden, the body of the woman in his arms, Grayface silently following.

Gordon forgot all else for the moment in a frenzy of remorse and despair. "I have killed

her! Shoot me!" he cried, thrusting his pistol into Mrs. Bloomer's hand. "I have killed her!"

"What did yez do, then? Shoot yourself, Gordon Firrus. Sure I'll not be taking the devil's own job from his fingers," said Mrs. Bloomer hotly, throwing the pistol to the ground.

But Snohomish's gaze was sternly and silently fixed on the motionless form he held in his arms.

"She is not dead, I think," he said; "she breathes slightly. Quick! help me get her to the house. I found her three miles down the cañon, fallen, with the dog beside her. Dalliance has gone on for the doctor. How did she come to be wandering in this way?"

Now for the first time he raised his eyes to Gordon. So, Gordon fancied in that moment, might the calm eyes of the Eternal Judge have rested on him. "You know best!" he answered, with desperate defiance. "I only know she was sleeping by my side when I fell asleep last night. I missed her in the morning, and

came out here to find you coming home *together.*"

Mrs. Bloomer instantly stooped and picked up the pistol.

"Take back that black lie on your tongue, Gordon Firrus," said she, "or I *will* shoot! Take it back!"

"Put up the pistol! woman," said Snohomish, sternly. "This woman's life needs no such defence from you or me! Would you insult her?"

He passed on silently unmoved. Mrs. Bloomer, with a frank glance of retributive intent at Gordon, put the pistol carefully in her pocket. She, with the rest of the female population at Last-chance, were well acquainted with its use.

They brought Lucie's child to her when her distracted consciousness began to return once more. There was healing for the mother in his touch; gentle tears came to her eyes; and yet it was a pathetically bewildered consciousness, mercifully robbed of all acute recollection—murmuring strange events in the sweetest composed voice, always the fine lady, with that

rare flush in her cheeks now, and eyes too wild and bright, tears relieving them instantly as she pressed her child to her bosom.

"I knew they had not taken him from me!" she cried. "God would not give him to me to let them take him from me long. God is good. He knows the hearts of us mothers. He is good."

"Yes, darlin'," said Mrs. Bloomer, gripping hard at the weapon in her pocket; "and who spoke of taking him from ye, Sweet? Was it yer husband? Say, was it Gordon Firrus?"

"Who?" said Lucie, with her quick ear, but wandringly. "My husband? He is dead, dear. He died above a year ago. He was so brave and good, if you could only have known him. They put the loveliest roses on his face. I thought you would have remembered that day. Do not cry. It is better where he is. Hush! you must not cry."

"Faith, and I know, and me own Magnus has gone there too," said Mrs. Bloomer; but whoever was it as give ye this trouble, darlin'? Look around ye, Sweet, and see. Was it him?"

She pointed towards Gordon. Lucie looked at him with curious, thoughtful eyes, in which there was neither dislike nor recognition.

"How could he hurt me?" she said; "I never saw him before. Poor man! he seems so sorry about something. We must all be kind to any one who is sorry. Christ says so."

"Oh Lucie," said Gordon, coming forward and throwing himself at her feet, the only tears that man was ever seen to shed streaming down his face, "don't you know me? Indeed you know me, your husband. Oh Lucie, think! You have had trouble, but shall never have any more. Only think! It will all clear itself to your mind in a moment. I am your husband, the father of our little boy. Speak to me, Lucie. You know me? Gordon."

Oh punishment of man! She who had never been his, gone now so fatally beyond his appeal, free forever from the sharp cross he had laid on her, turning only in sweet sorrow her perplexed and pitying face to Blandoline.

"God! this is too hard for a man!" cried Gordon; "she does not know me!"

Too late at last the words of passionate entreaty poured out at her feet. Never again, Gordon Ferris, never again shall you hear that loved voice in quick and tender recognition.

THE COMFORT OF THE
POOR-IN-HEART.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMFORT OF THE POOR-IN-HEART.

"THE doctor says it's only temporary, he thinks ; she'll be all right by and by," said Gordon, puffing his cigar with the air of a highly interesting and afflicted, though, on this occasion, much-relieved individual.

"And what are yez? Gordon Firrus. Are yez to be timperrary or a fixture?" said Mrs. Bloomer. "Sure the more timperrary yez are, the sooner my poor darlin' 'll be gettin' herself again, and the better for all of uz ; and it's longin' I am to see the last shake o' your coat tails goin' down beyent the cañon."

"You don't love me as you used to do,

Blandoline," said Gordon, an unlovely sneer lurking on his well-featured face. "However, I think I have a right to demand that my wife and child be brought home to my own house instead of remaining here."

"And when Lucie is taken to that house to be left with you again, Gordon Firrus, it'll be over my did body; mind that!"

"You're all against me," Gordon went on, moodily. "You're teaching that poor child Lucie to babble things about our past life, in her illness and innocence now, which will lead to fasten some suspicion on me. You think you can do it that way and escape yourselves. But I see through the whole thing very well, and I mean to prevent it, too."

"What are yez going to do, then?"

"If I hear much more of this blabbing and talking about things, Madame Bloomer, I mean to have my poor, innocent wife taken temporarily to some proper place away from the reach of such influences."

"Ye will, willl vez?" said Mrs. Bloomer; "not while there's so much as the blade of a case-

knife or the edge of a wood-axe left at Last-chance Junction, yez won't, Gordon Firrus! Not while there's a red vein left in the fist of Blandoline Bloomer, yez won't! mind that."

"You are quite good-looking yet, when you get worked up to the proper pitch, Blandoline."

"Handsome I may be," said poor Mrs. Bloomer, with boiling menace, "*but I'm not so handsome as my word is good*, Gordon Firrus! Do yez know, I never thought it of any human being before, but I could ate a steak of ye, that I could! I could salt the like, and pepper it, and ate it down, and smack me lips over it well—the Lord forgive me!"

Gordon laughed with insulting irony at her fury.

"You are a nice one to have one's family harbored with," he said. "We shall see."

So gentle as this woman was with Lucie and her child, so utterly unselfish, untiring in her love and labor, a great-souled compassionate creature, sleepless for their sake!

Now the king, comforted most of all with his mother, yet seemed to grieve in some mysteri-

ous sense over the pity of her malady. Mrs. Bloomer divined in an unspoken agony how the child was surely growing lighter to carry and paler day by day, his sweet flesh failing.

Then at last he would be only in his mother's arms, she soothing him with a face of untroubled and undying love. He, moaning in the old sweet, fretful way, the little under lip quivering, looked up at her pleadingly through tears, and then, in the radiance of her love, his winged mission on earth accomplished, he put on his royal smile for evermore; fixed — fixed on her face, immortal, far-seeing, beckoning her, to where in the kingdom of the childlike of heart, tears shall be no more.

"Oh my Sweet! my Sweet!" moaned Mrs. Bloomer, seeing how it was; then hushed, looking at Lucie's painless face. Not for all the world could she have said the child was dead; believed he was alive rather.

"See how pretty he looks! Do you know what I told him just now?" said Lucie.

"What, then? my love."

"I told him that I loved him better than all

the world beside. See, he answered me with his eyes. He is beautiful."

"Aye, he is that, but none too beautiful to go to God! 'Tis a short journey, I'm thinkin', and more and more an aisy one, to be takin' from this hard road."

"You must tell them not to cry any more," said Lucie. "Eternity is coming near. They can't get any music glad enough. It wasn't wild, that music, dear; it was as sweet as our sad music, but it was very glad! I can't tell you!"

"Sweetheart!" said Mrs. Bloomer.

"I am given more than a man can bear," said Gordon, and drank deeply in secret after that, going about with a stolid countenance, immured to his hard fate.

When Snohomish saw the king's dead face, a look came upon his own that no one had ever seen there before, nor could understand. There were no tears in his eyes, yet that seemed to cry God's pity for the lack of them! He turned, and walked away, Grayface, that friend of the broken-hearted, strangely following him.

But poor Bill Stiles, the king's quondam playmate, went to a little old box that had been the subject of much playful discussion among the "boys" in the camp, and took out a black coat of ancient and pathetic pattern ; this he put on over his nankeen trousers, having brushed his thin, straggling locks to an unusual point of perfection. And so he stumped solemnly up and down the trail, not far from the house where the king lay, the Falls sounding in his ears.

He had had his fling with the wildest of the boys once upon a day, and he was old, and had known little human affection ; being so battered and scarred, had been much shunned.

But the king had never noticed his defections, had gurgled with joy at the sight of him, had confided a cheek softer than a woman's against his battered face, looking with his divine, dewy eyes straight into the kind heart of him ; had a peculiar smile, too, that somehow Bill could never forget.

He lifted his hand to his eyes, but stumped on in black-robed dignity, faithful sentinel to his king who lay in state over yonder.

"Tell her she mustn't fret," said Bill, now and then stopping at Mrs. Bloomer's door, and speaking in a choking voice. "Tell her—tell her there's a golding gate."

Lucie looked after him with gentle compassion.

"We must be kind to him," she said; "my little one loved him."

"Ef I'd a ben true to what my old mother said," said Bill, stumping on, in sound of the Falls, "I wouldn't be a-beginnin' jest where I'd cught to be a-endin' here to-day, arter the world has knocked me all to pieces.

"Everything as my old mother said has proved true, true. 'Ef you goes wild, Bill,' says she, 'it'll come back on ye tenfold in waste and sorrer-harvest.

"'Ef you is ashamed to own your God, He'll make you ashamed to own yourself, Bill, in the end,' says she.

"Everything as ever she said has come true. But I remember oncet she said, 'He forgives them that be of a brorken and of a conterite heart.' And I remember as how my old mother

said, 'There's a golding gate,' says she ; 'there's a golding gate.' "

Father Marron said prayers at Lastchance also, Lucie not having been able to go down to the village.

Bill Stiles, off sentinel-duty now, listened reverently, but his mind was made up.

When Father Marron had finished, he stepped out before all the boys.

"Father Marron," said he, "is it too late for a petered-out, dead-beat, bullet-raddled, stump-legged, old galoot like me to jine religion ?"

Father Marron, hardly understanding the language, looked into the man's face searchingly.

"Too late ! my son," said he, then, "Christ never said 'too late.' "

"My reasons," Bill went on, huskily, "ain't no such reasons as they'd ought to be. I hain't nothin' ter offer, Father, and everythin' ter ask. I'm all knocked ter pieces and dead-broke long ago. But I'd be willin' to stump around and do somethin' humble-like for the Lord God, day and night, up thar', ef I thought I could be fit ter meet my old mother and that thar little inner-

cent child agin, and sech as them be, at the gold-ing gate."

As Bill made this confession, and Father Marron put to him some few questions, which he in like manner answered simply, kneeling there in his black coat and with his thin hair so phenomenally slick, it was said that Ned Swearington, usually quick to detect the ludicrous in every occasion, "snivelled" a little instead, and involuntarily brushed his coat-sleeve over his eyes.

There were high words about that afterwards, in which Ned proved able to carry his own defence.

But, however that might be, very certain it was that as Bill Stiles knelt thus and Father Marron laid his hand upon the man's meek head in blessing, over beyond the mountain peaks of "Baldy" and "Lone Star," where the sun was going down, there was a clear sign in the golden clouds, as of a gate swung outward!

SNOHOMISH.

CHAPTER XVII.

SNOHOMISH.

GORDON's graceful form never bent to the labor of the camp ; neither was any one against him : that was destined so to be. Even Blandoline was quite satisfied without vengeance, so he was not in her sight.

But he fancied they were all against him plotting his betrayal, and was very weary of the place beside. He had a design to get away, but had no intention of leaving Lucie there.

He took to wandering daily again down to the village, and no one hindered him.

Much rumor was there of the young man's deep sorrows. He had a graceful and winning

address, and more of the air of truth than a truthful person, and he met with kindness in many homes. He was much at Dr. Lambeth's office, who also heard and pitied his story.

One day, when he knew that Snohomish was expecting to be absent all day with his men, at some new piece of timber, three miles farther up the cañon, Gordon was seen coming slowly up the pass in a carriage, with Dr. Lambeth and another physician, and Blandoline's quick sense of love for her charge instantly detected his treachery.

"Dalliance," said she, slipping out to the little barn where Dalliance was combing the one horse of the camp, "Mount ye on Lady, quick, and as soon as ever ye see those men be in the house, do yez creep, creep, creep, my darlin', till yez get out of ear and sight up the cañon, and then gallop for dear life, as yez love yer own mother, and send down Snohomish here."

Very gracious and suave was Gordon in his manners to Blandoline before the doctors, and serpent-wise was the loving Blandoline.

Dr. Frank addressed her soothingly, having been introduced with flattering ceremony to poor Blandoline.

"You know, my dear madam," said he, "it will be so much better for your charge, if she may be taken away from all these agitating associations with the death of her child, and her own illness, and put under competent treatment."

"Aye, yes, indade, doctor," said the serpent-wise Blandoline, whose cannibal propensities were inwardly so strong at that moment she could have devoured Gordon entire on the spot. "Yes, indade, doctor, it's what I've had to be thinkin' meself at last ; ah me !"

And she lifted her apron to her tearful eyes, practically much meditating.

Dr. Frank regarded her a little blankly, having been informed that he would have a severe tussle of words at least with this formidable woman, and naturally taken aback at her subdued and tearful readiness.

"Her husband will go with her, of course," continued the doctor, more confidently, "to be

always near her, and to note her recovery, which we trust, with her renewed recognition of his devotion, and under more appropriate auspices altogether, will be rapid."

"Oh, and it's no fear I have at all then, if Mr. Ferrus is going with her," said Blandoline sweetly.

"What in h—l is the woman up to?" thought Gordon.

"Dalliance!" said Mrs. Bloomer, with a double bold stroke, going to the kitchen door and thrusting her head out a little, "will yez be puttin' on the chickens, dear, to broil for luncheon?" Thus she assumed that Dalliance was in the kitchen, and relieved her overwrought cannibalism with the imagination that Gordon was being prepared for the griddle.

"Sure, and it's no fear I have at all for her then," she repeated sweetly, composing herself in the room.

"Mr. Ferris informs us," the doctor continued, much encouraged, "that though there are some very worthy people here in the camp, — yourself among them, I have no doubt, Mrs.

Bloomer,—there are some who have been whispering things in this lady's ear, calculated to retard her mental recovery, and to set her most unfortunately against the husband who is her natural protector."

"Dalliance!" said Mrs. Bloomer, going once more to the door, "yez know these are tough fowls and 'll need a bit coal more. Do them well, Dalliance!"

"Excuse me, doctor; sorry I am indade to hear the words yez have just spoken; and not knowin' anythin' of it, I'll not by no means be denyin' it."

"So, in fact, my dear madam, we are pleased to see that we shall have your hearty corroboration in our intention of taking this poor lady away to-day and placing her —"

"Excuse me, doctor, but that reminds me. Dalliance!" cried Mrs. Bloomer earnestly through the door, "never mind the bit heart of it! It's never tinder in that breed, and wouldn't be makin' a dacent taste for anybody! Excuse me, doctor, yez was sayin'?"

"That we shall have your assistance at once in getting Mrs. Ferris away to-day?"

"Oh indade, then, and God bless ye, doctor, for what I know to be *your* kind heart. But ye'll be takin' a bit o' luncheon with me to-day? Sure I'll have it on the table in a few moments."

"I don't think we will stop now, Blandoline, thank you!" said Gordon.

"Pardon me, Ferris," said the older of the two physicians, laughing, "but your air up here is very appetizing, and you know I have had a taste of good Mrs. Bloomer's cooking before. I believe I shall accept her offer."

"Will yez pardon me, then, if I bē palin' a few potaties here before ye, as it won't take no time at all to fry, not to be losin' the pleasure of your company, our cook bein' gone with the men to the timber, sure, and none o' them comin' home till night."

Gordon was nervous, but Blandoline, with a challenge to the kitchen to "do the livers very brown," set herself composedly to her task.

And then it was that this true Irishwoman's

speech flowed on in a melodious river of never-ending and pathetic anecdote, to which Dr. Lambeth, anticipative of the fried chickens and potatoes, listened with human interest, Gordon growing very restive, though it was not yet noon.

Blandoline proceeded deliberately (the trail up the cañon was a tortuous one), but she knew she could not yet hope for Snohomish. There was no Dalliance in the kitchen, no fire, no chickens, alas! What to do! and still her pellucid speech flowed on like a river.

Gordon went to the kitchen door and looked out. "This woman is playing us a trick to detain us, gentlemen," he said, angrily. "See! her kitchen is fireless and empty. I told you they were full of plots up here. This will do, madam. Get my wife ready, and we will go."

"Oh, Dr. Lambeth," said Mrs. Bloomer, bursting into tears, "can ye blame me for wantin' to keep my poor darlin' with me as long as possible? And, doctor, ye know it was never in me and Magnus but to share our last bit with anybody. And, doctor, there's plenty

indade in the house, and chickens at the door as I can be gettin' ready in no time, if ye'll only stay and dine with us."

"Yes, I know! I know! Thank you, Mrs. Bloomer," said Dr. Lambeth, kindly; "but really I'm afraid I haven't time for that now. Some other time, Mrs. Bloomer. I think you must be getting Mrs. Ferris ready now."

So Blandoline, with a heart-broken lack of concentration, and occasional floods of tears that much delayed her progress, began to get Lucie's things together, Gordon watching her impatiently, and she now and then looking towards the cañon with, Heaven only knew, what an agony of despair and hope.

But when everything was ready, Blandoline suddenly dried her eyes and held herself erect with folded arms in the doorway. "Yez are not going to take her! Gordon Firrus," said she, "and that's all there is to it! Not while there's a finger nail or a hair o' me left, yez are not going to take her!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the younger physician impatiently, "she's crazy too!"

"That I be!" asserted Mrs. Bloomer, daringly, "I'm the wildest maniac out o' Bedlam, and me bite 'll be worse for ye nor the bite o' a mad dog. Don't yez come near me!"

"Pshaw!" said Gordon, "a woman's tantrum is not so rare as all that. I warned you what she is, gentlemen. You can see what my poor wife has had to endure. I'm sorry for the exhibition; it shocks a gentleman's instincts; but really I shall have to bind this woman while you assist my wife into the carriage. I shall be as gentle as possible."

"Oh, Dr. Lambeth, it was he himself as did it," cried Blandoline. "I could take my dyin' oath to it. He drove my poor darlin' insane with his cruelty. It was he himself as I heard him say he had killed her!"

Gordon, with an evil light in his eye, had stealthily procured a rope and approached Blandoline, Dr. Lambeth bewildered and half-protesting, when Lady's sharp hoofs were heard clattering fiercely down the upper cañon.

With a rider? Whom? At sight of Snoho-

mish, Blandoline lifted a wild cry to Heaven, and fell, fainting.

Snohomish needed no explanation as he alighted from his horse.

"Did you attempt to bind that *woman*?" he said, pointing to the prostrate form in the doorway.

"What matter?" said Gordon, his defeated hate taking the last refuge of insolence. "I mind my own affairs. Say what you have to say, and have done with it!"

"Gentlemen," said Snohomish, "I have never struck nor condemned that man yonder — and I never shall. But he knows that he must obey me. Witness that he shall obey me.

"Go!" said he, fixing his calm and terrible eyes on Gordon. "Go forever from my sight!"

Gordon's hand had been covertly seeking his breast; he drew out his revolver and fired, leaped on the horse to which he had drawn near, and rode desperately down the defile.

Snohomish staggered to his feet and half-lifted his shattered arm, with a smile.

"Let no man pursue him," he said.

WHOSE VENGEANCE IS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHOSE VENGEANCE IS.

THERE came a sort of Indian summer of peace at Lastchance. But one day there got off at the station at Gulch City a woman who was but the haggard ghost of her old bright self.—Mary Williams.

She took the trail by the river leading up to Lastchance, then hesitated and went back to the little church, cross-surmounted. “Father Mar-ron,” she said, sinking down like one who sees almost to the end of a desperate journey, her parched lips set in a bitter triumph, “I have done a task that I set myself to do. I go up, yonder to condemn Gordon Ferris. I have done

my work, looking ever to this day. I have found the instigator of my husband's murder. I go up yonder before them all to accuse and arraign him. I am near what I have been thirsting for these many months. But oh, Father, I am very weary. Give me thy blessing ! ”

“Gordon Ferris hath escaped thee, Mary,” said Father Marron ; “he attempted—a *brother's* life, and he has left Lastchance, never to return.”

“And *this* is the God of justice and love ! ” cried Mary, rising and clinching her uplifted hands, “who lets the innocent forever suffer, and the guilty escape unpunished ! *This* —”

“Forever ? ” said Father Marron. “Neither forever, nor ever. Speak, woman, of that thou knowest.”

Mary had sunk down with her thin clinched hands still held above her, and was weeping passionately.

“And thou ? ” said Father Marron, sternly, “what hast thou been doing ? Forsaking every task God gave thee, to usurp *His* task. Weary ? woman. Art thou not weary unto death ? See,

all things He gave thee to fill thy life: truth, bravery, healing, love, forgiveness, all these are thine. 'Vengeance,' he saith, 'is *mine!* is *mine!*'"

Father Marron's shrill voice rang out above her in terrible accusation.

The woman's thin, strained hands unclasped, and fell about her face.

"Weary? my child," said Father Marron; "well art thou weary. To the sufferance of great wrong, to the redeeming of evil, to the succor of the distressed, to forgiveness to which thou settest not thine own bounds, but criest after the sea of God, to these there is rest forever in thine heart with God; but to the seeking of revenge there is no end for thee, no rest. It was not thy task. Turn thou again to God."

"Oh Father," the woman sobbed, "he has wronged many. We suffer; he alone does not suffer; he escapes."

"My child, better a thousand times the woe of suffering than that escape. Mary, I will tell thee of a task God has for thee. Yonder at

Lastchance Lucie Ferris lies this day ill, and near, they think, to death. Go thou; they that watch with her are worn; thou also art worn, but in this labor God may save both her and thee."

Mary bowed her head, and folded her thin hands in the attitude of penitent prayer.

The priest laid his hand upon her head in blessing. "Go, and God be with thee! my brave child," he said.

Mary went on her way, strangely no more wearied, and with swift feet. Lucie's second child had been born that day—dead, in his perfect infant beauty, briefest of angel visitants, only calling back the mother's distressed mind to sanity.

For when she rallied from the grave's shadow, and after treacherous wavering days, opened her eyes once more with consciousness, it was to know perfectly all those about her.

"Mary!" she said feebly, to the face bending over her—with strange joy clinging to her.

Mary pressed her bounding heart against that

feeble one, as though she would have given it her own life.

"Where is my child?" said Lucie, surely and sadly knowing, dark tears filling her eyes.

"In heaven, dearest, with your first-born, safe and blessed, with God."

And in the days that followed, Lucie, weak, weak almost herself, as a new-born child, clung to the two women, Mary and Blandoline, looking often piteously, but never speaking Gordon's name.

It was not until she was able to sit up a little in her chair by the fire, Snohomish being in the room, that she said one evening, before the two women :

"Where is my husband? Snohomish, — your brother?"

She spoke with a great effort, falteringly.

"He was alive when he left us, and unharmed," said Snohomish gently. "He did not leave you voluntarily; he was very desperate. We have heard nothing more of him."

Lucie lifted her eyes with a passionate gratitude.

"You have forborne very much," she said. "I know the whole. No one told me; I know it. It is not what one can speak, nor say I am sorry, nor say I thank you! I only want to tell you that I know."

Snohomish, with his impenetrable, benign face, darted a keen glance at her, forbidding her.

"My poor sister," he said "it is not that; it is your suffering that has wrung our hearts. Always I would have saved you, but it could not be. You will believe me, Lucie, that it wrung my heart?"

"My suffering!" cried Lucie, with flashing eyes. "What was it to have gone through what I have, to have found that there could be an existence like yours! I did not know; I did not dream; but I thank God for the way He has led me! Were life before me again, I would forego all the world's pleasure or success, I would choose all suffering, rather than forget again that there *could* be a life like yours!"

This from her! from her! The dim, bare room swam before his eyes, his brain flooded.

with an ecstasy as strangely above passion as though he felt the thrill of dying there, and going to his bliss !

He looked at her, her great eyes full upon him. Not love he read there, but he read again, silently, the look of the mother who lays her dead to rest ; and he rose and took her hand a moment, frail shadow of a hand against his own, and bowed his head above it reverently, and went away.

THE WEARY RESTLESS.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WEARY RESTLESS.

LUCIE believed that Gordon would never return. Dead to her, and yet not dead ; a dream-like, restless, haunting memory.

She would have returned to her own home and people, calling her ; who would have hastened to her had they known her real condition. But could she bring what, with Gordon's reappearance, might prove yet a great living trouble and tragedy, there ?

And her children slept at Lastchance within the murmur of the river. She was feeble exceedingly. She wandered, as the Autumn days came in desolate glory, oftenest to their graves,

and dreamed, not sadly, of another grave within the murmur of the river, that should be hers beside them.

Grayface, friend of the unfortunate, could not speak, but, weary and old, he had oftener in those days a look as though he lifted his blind eyes to Eternity.

There came a night more bleak than the others, with rain and clearing cold, and in the morning the dog had wandered away, and could not be found about the place.

"I am going down the cañon to look for him," said Snohomish, calling one of his men. "Poor old Grayface! he is one of us."

"Take me instead," said Lucie, suddenly appealing to him, with the vivid strength that was too strong for the flesh; I think that *I* should go. If it should be — oh Snohomish! — it might be he?" Her face was white and piteous. Seeing how it was with her:

"Come," said Snohomish.

What had the Weary Restless for his toils under the sun? The hand that had lost the

world, lost truth, honor, love, lay in frozen dumb supplication at last over a dead dog's neck.

For Grayface, whom he had held shivering over the abyss, had found and pitied him.

There in the bitter night, his dying lips un-kissed save by the wandering dead leaves under the wild sky, Grayface had lain his head upon him as if to warm his frozen breast, and finding him then so utterly desolate and forsaken, had even died with him!

With whatever purpose of sorrow or confession it might be that Gordon had undertaken to return to Lastchance, there was no confession found upon him, only these words that he had scrawled upon a scrap of paper with his own blood at last — "*Lucie ; I have lost all.*"

Poor frozen hand, grasping at all things, and had thrown the Life of the world away!

Snohomish feared again for Lucie's reason. She had knelt beside Gordon and could not lift his pallid head, but was murmuring fond and pitiful words to him as of old time, stroking back the hair from the once handsome face, now so bloated and despoiled.

Snohomish stood with folded arms, looking down, and the living man's face was sharp and drawn with mortal sufferance.

"Pity him!" cried Lucie, lifting her streaming eyes, "pity him."

"Lucie," said the man tensely, though with unbroken gentleness, "I have pitied him."

"You!" cried Lucie, with suddenly bewildered, flashing vision, "you stand there as though he had defrauded you of aught! *You!* has God made you so great, and yet you cannot see! You who have all things; he, who has failed of everything. Pity him! pity him!

"*You* humble! *You* sad! Oh Snohomish!" She stood before him like a pale though shining ghost. "God forgive you for such sad humility! What has he gained in all the world, who lies there dead before you? What have you lost! Speak, before your God! Pity us! pity us!"

"Lucie," said Snohomish, roused and wondering, "I thought, at the last, this man would have delivered my good name. Lucie, it has been bitter to watch you — die — from day to

day. And if I had a dream of a name and of a home that should be yours — ”

“I could not have entered it, except through death !”

She smiled brilliantly, lifting her frail hands. “He slew me ; and he brought me to you. Not otherwise should I have been worthy. Had I been yours in the mad, careless days that gave me to him, even so I might have trampled on your faith and love ! This kind goeth not out but by such deep stress. Pity us !”

Her eyes, holy, steadfast, smiled still upon him, recalling him. Again he read there the tenderness that should be his forever — the despair and the immortal hope of the mother who lays her dead to rest. His own gaze, struggling through its life-renunciation, grew God-like.

As he bowed his great strength tenderly to lift the burden at his feet, tears fell from his eyes upon the dead man's face.

CREDO.

"C R E D O."

* * * *

SNOHOMISH dwells at Lastchance. Torn out of his own life in the world, as it were, and sent to so forlorn a spot, only to live Christ-like, he has missed all the deep philosophy of the day.

The conscientious modelling of new creeds, the religious despair over the dark, mutual decline of faith, could weigh nothing before the 'sad, expectant eyes that have in such strict truth believed the Christ of Calvary.

The miracles of old, the acts of healing, the turning of water into wine, are not so marvellous to him as the ghostly sayings that forever rule above the world. Trite are they and lightly

held of the unbelieving world, that forever writes them immutably at last in its own blood !

“Hearken ye ! He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake and the truth, the same shall save it unto life Eternal !”

Mourn did He, and had exceeding joy ! resigned all, and counted infinite possessions ! served lowly, and was a king ! died, and is alive for evermore !

Who — who, then, shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? Dark looks from disciple to sage, from the lord of this world’s goods to noted philanthropist. But He—the humble, stainless Christ of truth,—He lifted a little child, and set him in the midst of them ! Whoso *thus* believeth.

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